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Sanctuary



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SANCTUARY

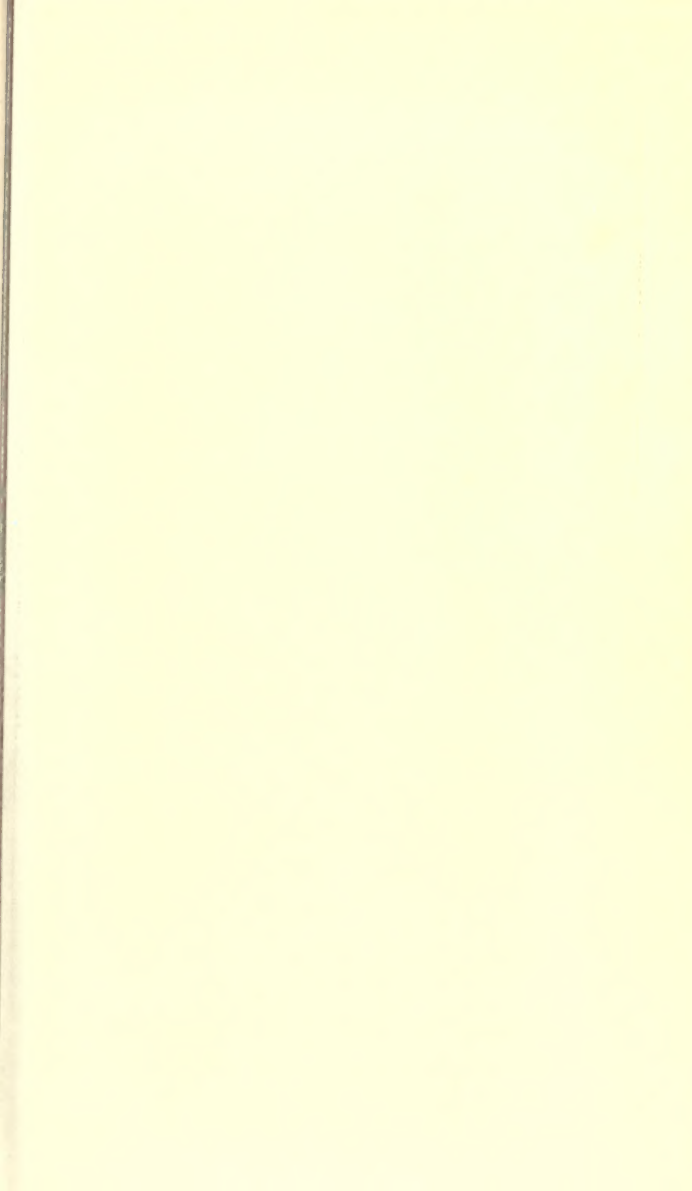
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SEEKING SANCTUARY AT DURHAM CATHEDRAL.

*From an oil-painting by the late Ralph Hedley, R.B.A., by permission
of his executors.*

Frontispiece.

SANCTUARY

BY

MARY ANGELA DICKENS

WITH A PREFACE

BY

FATHER CHARLES GALTON, S.J.

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"Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

ST. JOHN vi. 37.

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.

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TORONTO

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AT THE FEET OF THE
MOTHER OF JESUS,

WHO HELD HIM IN HER ARMS ON EARTH,
AND PLEADS BEFORE HIM NOW IN HEAVEN, THAT
WE MAY ALL FIND SANCTUARY IN THE
HOUR OF OUR NEED,
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS HUMBL Y LAID

NOTE

IN early days it was the law of the land that, "wheresoever an accused or guilty person shall fly to a church for protection, from the moment he touches the threshold of the church he shall on no account be seized by his pursuers." This right of sanctuary, or the "Peace" as it was called, was assigned to every church consecrated by a Bishop.

PREFACE

I HAVE been asked to write a preface to this little book—a book filled from end to end with devotional thoughts. I am surely not expected to add more viands to a full banquet, nor is my preface to be by way of decoration, like the flowers and music which Holy Scripture tells us are the right adornments of a banquet, for these the author has not failed to introduce into the work itself in ample profusion. What, then, is my task? The preface, written by a hand other than that of the author, seems to me but too often to hit beside the mark. Its only proper purpose, to my thinking, is like the introductory speech of the chairman at a public meeting—not to trench on the matters to be treated of, but to say how respectable and competent a person is the gentleman who is about to hold the floor. It is to introduce not the subject, but the speaker. If this is my task, I have a pleasant one indeed. The author is the happy owner of one of the great names in our literature, and not only of the name but of the blood of that famous

and most prolific of writers ; and though the subject-matter is far different and far higher than those on which he wielded his mighty pen, one can find some traces of inherited genius and not a little of inherited feeling in these pages. The competence of the author as a guide to the one Sanctuary of safety accorded of men in sorrow and success is not, however, to be found in ancestry, but has been earned by hard experience. This book is not the work of a theologian or a master of the spirit, but its very charm will be found by many in the absence of that which Emerson calls the "professional touch." And though the writer has been spared many of those sorrows in life which are reckoned as the deepest, nor has had to cross the great gulf which a returning prodigal alone has to traverse, still the restoration of peace of mind and quiet of heart in finding sanctuary after lesser but still galling afflictions may render even a minor sufferer competent to speak the word of hope to all. The Sanctuary of peace itself, which is in God, is found so vast that one has but to live in it to know that every possible human sorrow has its remedy there. The Sanctuary is the home of the Beatitudes, and what human sorrow, what source of human restlessness, has not Jesus transfigured into blessedness in that doctrine so divinely paradoxical? I do not know that the author has been ever touched by the bitterness of the true *jetziger Weltschmerz*, the accumulated

sorrows, result of our social evils and wrongs ; but, none the less, in this Sanctuary is its only healing to be found. I am not concerned to prove that our writer's outlook could not have been vastly enlarged ; but a fruitful task has, I think, been fulfilled, and competently, in these pages, the result of pious thought, feeling, and experience, and the author will be, I know, amply rewarded if only a few more will hasten in her wake to take Sanctuary in their griefs, both great and small.

CHARLES S. GALTON, S.J.



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SANCTUARY

CHAPTER I

SANCTUARY

"Thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise" (Isa. lx. 18).

THIS little book is of the very simplest nature. In it are only such thoughts as God gives to everyone, thoughts which are pressing all about us, waiting until we clear away some of the everyday lumber which bars the entrance to our hearts, and make room for them.

We are very hard of hearing and very slow of comprehension. We cannot always understand the Spirit of God speaking within us. We have not always time to stop and ponder. When He thunders from His heavens, when His voice calls from the storm, as it is surely calling now throughout the world, the sound is too great for us. We are stunned. We find it incredible that it should truly be God who is speaking in His majesty. We had forgotten His more terrible tones. He had spoken gently for so long. We are carried this way and that, bewildered by the clash of human passions which

seem to fill the whole earth. We cannot realize that behind them is the call of God to a world that was in danger of forgetting Him.

This dulness of comprehension is our weakness, one of the disabilities of our nature. And so our Father, to whom all our weaknesses and disabilities are known, in whose sight they are all pitiful; our Father whose resources are illimitable, and who never tires of applying them to our grievous need, speaks to us even to-day, even in the hour of His wrath, not only in the voice of His majesty, but also in little words. A child may give His message—it may be hidden anywhere, in anything. Nothing is too contemptible for the use of the great Creator of all, for He despises nothing that He has made. The knowledge and love of God is the end for which we live, our only happiness in life, in death, and in eternity. And to this knowledge and this love, which He desires for us so much more ardently than we desire it for ourselves, He helps us in innumerable ways—sometimes, since no means are inadequate if the power of the Most High is behind them, by the mere putting into words of thoughts so simple that they have only lain dormant in our minds, only need to be drawn forth. Such thoughts as these alone are here. They come from God, as every smallest thought of love for God must come. And they are put into His hand.

Rough and massive, on the door of the

cathedral of Durham, stands out the sanctuary knocker, a treasure to the lover of old days, a curiosity to the sightseer, and to those of the faith a mute witness to that of which England has been robbed—the strength of the Church.

Look at it with the eyes of the mind, and the present will give place to the past. Stand there alone as evening falls, or as the dawn lightens slow and cold on a winter's morning. Give the imagination rein, and suddenly the surrounding silence breaks up. The noise of rushing footsteps tears it to pieces, carrying with it that strange suggestion of terror which always springs into life with a sudden hurrying of feet; and across the empty space comes the flying figure of a man, his face white and haggard, stained with dust and sweat, his eyes starting, panting heavily as he casts a glance over his shoulder. The clamour of pursuit seems to have leapt into life with the first sound of those desperate steps. The air rings with the clatter of weapons, with shouts and cries; men seem to have sprung out of the very earth, men with fierce eyes and rough, relentless voices, men thirsting for man's blood. They are on his very heels, they all but have him. But with a last rush, even as the shouts of his pursuers rise into a cry of triumph, the quarry darts across the open space, throws himself against the massive door which bars the entrance to the church, and, flinging up his arm, clutches the great knocker above his head. The

hunters, carried by their own impetus close about him, so near that the hungry weapons brandished aloft flash over his very head, come to a sudden standstill. Their prey is theirs. They cannot touch it. The lust of hate had in anticipation tasted satisfaction; it is balked. Movement subsides into stillness, the tumult dies into silence. It is as though in that sudden arresting of the onward sweep of death a mighty voice had spoken, a mighty presence made itself felt, and men stood quelled before it.

Then gradually the voices rise once more in muttered imprecations; movement begins again as the hunters draw slowly back, glaring at the man crouched at their feet, his back towards them, helpless, exhausted, his breath coming in great sobbing gasps, utterly at their mercy, but that he clings with the last effort of departing consciousness to the great knocker, and is safe.

Hunters and hunted vanish, the picture out of the past disappears, and the present reasserts itself. We come back to to-day, but we bring with us a new realization that yesterday indeed was. It was a scene which must have been enacted in the days of old not once or twice, but many times; solid realities, such as the sanctuary knocker, were not made to meet imaginary needs. We lose many of the suggestions and lessons of the past because we blur them with the atmosphere of the present, and look upon that as picturesque of which the true value and

meaning lay in its bald practicality. What, then, has this vision of a wild old day left with us? Whither will the train of thought which it has aroused carry us? Where is that connecting link which never fails between the past and present?

The needs of human life are very numerous and very pressing. They weigh upon us now—upon the race at large—as they have never weighed within the memory of living man. But always, in times of peace no less than in times of war, the load is heavy. In our egoism it seems to each one of us that those under which he individually labours are peculiar to his own peculiar personality. But as a matter of fact there is no peculiarity at all about them. Each and every one is to be traced to its source in one or other of the few primal needs of man; and among these primal needs, none is more deep-seated than that which is expressed in man's instinct to find or to make something wherein he can take refuge. A little child confronted with a stranger hides behind his mother. Man in embryo to another form—primitive, uncivilized man—entrenches himself against his fellow-man and erects strongholds as best he may against the forces of nature. To primitive man his limitations are very present; his life depends from day to day upon a just reckoning with them. Civilized man must go a step further from the merely material if he is to know himself. And civilization, which should

quicken man's perceptions, too often weaves a veil between him and the fundamental facts of his being. In this time of upheaval, when many veils are being stripped away, surely this veritable shroud of man's soul, confusion between the fundamental and the transitory, should be among the first to disappear.

The tendency to exalt and laud the intrinsic might and majesty of man is a feature of modern scepticism, as it has probably been of all forms of unbelief in all ages. If there be no God, and man be in some mysterious way self-created and self-supporting, he is indeed, in some of his aspects, a very fine fellow. If there be no explanation of misery and sin and all the less admirable attributes of mankind, by all means let us shut our eyes to them, and dwell only on the human intellect and its dominion over the powers of nature, on the human will and its mastery over circumstances, on the all-conquering energy of this lord of the world. But unfortunately—or rather most happily and in God's good providence—however closely we may shut our eyes, facts assert themselves. The mighty fact of death, above all, is for ever refusing to be shut out, for ever upsetting the scheme which postulates man as the strong and unconquerable, the master of his fate. Before death, who can fancy himself to be other than what he is—totally impotent? Let him deny it and ignore it as he will, in every

man, born with him, and never leaving him even in the zenith of strength, there is a lurking consciousness that he stands, a puny being, in the midst of forces greater than himself. He may never face this consciousness until it comes to him at last clothed in the majesty of that authority which no man may resist—God's call to leave this world. He may never face it, but the consciousness is in him. To-day, as in the first ages of the world, in the learned as in the ignorant, in the civilized as in the primitive, one ineradicable instinct at least remains—the sense of weakness.

It is in him always. It is in him in a world at peace not less than in a world at war. In ages of prosperity and progress as in the days of devastation, in success and in failure, in joy and in sorrow—it is in him always.

The providence of God which placed within us this Divine seed is infinitely beyond the limits of our understanding. But some at least of its merciful operations we can see. God gave to man, when He created him, the knowledge of Himself. Man forfeited that knowledge and sank by the sin of disobedience into darkness. Desiring all things, he lost that which alone avails. But the Creator whom he had outraged loved His creature still, and left within him disabilities as well as faculties by which he could be drawn back to some comprehension, at least, of the Eternal Truth. One of these disabilities

is here. Out of his sense of weakness there rises in agnostic man his earliest groping feeling towards an unknown force, a power which can destroy but which can also protect, a power which may be angered but which may also be propitiated—the first halting movement of the soul towards God. As that movement becomes stronger and better directed, out of that sense of weakness grows its corollary—a dawning conception of the infinite strength and majesty of God, the adoration of the holy Strong One, the worship of the one true God. And, finally, out of that sense of weakness, through all the ages, has sprung prayer; the cry of helplessness to power, of poverty to boundless riches, of misery to infinite compassion. To-day, when the conditions of life are such that the sense of weakness may almost be said to be the dominant sense in each one of us, to what is it that man turns? What is it that we find in all directions, not only in those who know God, but in those who know Him not? It is the instinct of prayer. The nations, turned against each other, are turning back to God. From all sides the cry is going up, “Help us, O Lord, for vain is the help of man.” Man’s necessities are in very truth God’s opportunities.

And so we come back to the sanctuary knocker and all that it implies.

That was a rude age which saw the knocker fixed in its place—an age when life was a rough-

and-ready business, and might was right. Life and liberty were always more or less in danger, and the necessity of guarding them was an ever-present background to men's thoughts. The law to which appeal might be made was an exceedingly uncertain quantity, except in as much as it might fairly be counted upon to side with the strong against the weak. No man could be so foolhardy as to suppose that his own strength would always be sufficient for his day. To all men, therefore, the existence of some sure stronghold was a very present need. And the Church, the centre of temporal life in those days after a fashion which we only vaguely realize, the Church divinely practical and efficient in that as in every age, supplied materially the need of a material day. The history of the rights of sanctuary is, in the beginning, the history of the Church's protection of her children, and in the end the history of her children's abuse of that protection. It established a refuge not for the soul alone, but for the very body of man, a refuge intangible but practically inviolable. It supplied that which man's social system was then unable to supply—protection for the beaten, a stronghold for the weak, justice for the right. It was abused, of course, as all large and generous dealings with mankind are abused. The guilty snatched the bounty intended for the innocent, on the one hand. On the other, once now and

again, the fortress of the Church was violated. But on the whole it met the end to which it was adapted royally, and more than royally—divinely. The Church stood forth, helper of the helpless, refuge of the destitute, after a manner which all men could understand. Man, woman and child, casting themselves into her arms, were safe from their enemies. The strong passions, the fierce, unruly loves and hates of a virile generation, were not to run riot over the whole earth. The Church, in the name of Him who is the Father of all men, interposed with the eternal “Thus far and no farther.” Of certain places she elected to say, “This ground is mine. The creature that sets foot on it, claiming my protection, obtains it. Let none presume to lift a hand against him.”

Times changed. Man, in the providence of God, developed anew that sense of law and order which seems to ebb and flow like a wave in the history of the human race. The age became less simple as its hopes and fears became less exclusively material, and it replaced the material protection of the Church by methods of protection of another type. The rights of sanctuary went through a period of decay and desecration, and fell into disuse. Their day was done.

Legally and as a temporal institution their day was done, that is to say. But deeply seated in man's soul is the instinct that God's house

is holy, and that no violence should enter into it. Even in non-Catholics, who have not the tremendous reason for reverence present to the mind of every Catholic child, the instinct lives, whether as a survival and an inheritance, or as an elementary gift of God—who shall say? It is, at least, a fact not to be gainsaid that few among the deeds which have disgraced humanity during the present war have more deeply outraged public feeling than the desecration of the churches. The rights of sanctuary, we all know, are no longer theirs. By God's permission these might be allowed or disallowed by man, as his material necessities seemed to require. The right to reverence is beyond man's reach. It is essential to the majesty of God, who claims it.

Times change, but the nature of man remains always the same. The root of weakness is within him. If he is supported and sustained on one side of his being until it seems to be eradicated it reveals itself on another. Peril from our fellow-men had almost ceased to exist for us under ordinary circumstances as among the urgent probabilities of existence, and we had so surrounded ourselves with safeguards that we had practically forgotten the dangers against which they were originally provided. Security in this sense—the physical security which is one of the preliminaries of civilization—has departed for the time with the temporary failure of civilization to control primeval in-

instincts. But that this failure is in truth temporary we need not doubt. Civilization is one of God's tools, though man had taken it out of His hand. He will take it again, and reshape the world with it. The hour of material danger will pass, we may hope and pray, in His good time.

But though material safety may return again, God will never let the sense of need die wholly out of His creatures. To do so would be indeed to cast them off for ever. And therefore, by His goodness, man will be born to-morrow as to-day, as in the ages past, to trouble and to fear. That very progress which has removed one source of uneasiness from him has developed others. As life has become less simple, and its simple difficulties have been wiped out, a host of more complicated dangers have taken their place. As his mental processes have become more subtle, mental and spiritual enemies threaten instead of the material enemies of a bygone day.

The rapidity with which life moves to-day is a well-worn subject, and the truth it holds is acknowledged verbally with but little appreciation of the influence it is exercising upon humanity at large. The unceasing strain which this rapidity of life involves has created conditions which have changed the centre of life, under normal circumstances, from the muscular to the nervous system. Man no longer feels his

weakness chiefly in his contact with his fellow-man ; he feels it in his contact with himself. Civilized, resourceful, scientific, his instinctive craving for protection is in the very fibre of his nature now, as it has ever been, only it moves on other lines.

There is no more curious and significant feature of the present moment than the number of "new religions," or of cults having at least some affinity with religion, which are continually making their appearance. Most women and many men—excluding, of course, those to whom has been given the gift of faith—make trial at some time or another of one or more of these systems, embrace it with enthusiasm, and press it upon all their friends with the irrepressible joy of one who has found the answer to the riddle of life ; and then by degrees slacken, sadden, fall back into the state of unsatisfied desire from which they thought to have passed for ever. There are few things more piteous to watch than this drama, which is for ever being enacted about us. What is all this pathetic readiness to believe anyone who proclaims any kind of insight into the mystery of things but a reproduction of the impulse which led primitive man to make his feeble barricades against his human foes and offer futile sacrifices to propitiate his angry god—the impulse towards a refuge ? Christian Scientists, devotees of the Higher Thought, students of the occult, all aim at the

same goal—a hiding-place from the storm. Putting aside religious experiments, what do we see in all the “movements” of the day but the restless energy of the modern mind, as it frees itself from the duties and ways of thought of a bygone day, striving to make for itself a barrier which shall protect it from its own all-devouring activity? The age is intellectually turbulent; a man’s foes are indeed of his own household, part of his very being. His judgment, his moral balance, are for ever threatened. And in his anxiety to entrench himself he catches at the veriest straws.

But not only upon those who are seeking an answer to the fundamental riddle of existence, not only upon the agnostic and the sceptical, do the dangers and difficulties of the day press heavily. Not faith itself can give to man exemption from the attacks of those insidious foes which are inevitable attendants on his present stage of development. Such foes must be reckoned with; they cannot be ignored. No man, looking into his own nature, in those secret moments when he sees things as they truly are, finds there that which will avail against them; he must look for it outside himself.

The Church stood forth in bygone days, protecting, sheltering, offering sanctuary to all who claimed her help. What does she do to-day?

In Catholic countries, to the poor and the uneducated, she is still, indeed, much what she

was five hundred years ago. Her poorer children and those of simpler faith turn to the roof which shelters the God who still dwells among men, instinctively, as their forefathers turned, as to a homely refuge in which is ever to be found a moment's peace and rest. Here, in England, three hundred years for which the Church has been a name and nothing more have robbed us of this instinct, as they have robbed us of much besides. The matter-of-fact simplicity which is the very birthright of the Breton peasant, for example, is here but rarely found. But in those countries where His children have suffered no estrangement from Him the working man with a heavy load on his shoulders pushes open the door of the church, lowers his burden to the ground, kneels beside it for a little, and goes on his way, rested. The woman with a baby in her arms comes in, reverences her Lord, and then sits down and feeds her little child, as He has taught her, in His sight. They are in their Father's house, and that Father gives to each one of His children that of which he stands in need. For every heart and mind and body, be it great or small, clouded or enlightened, strong or weak, He has that touch which it can feel, that word which it can understand, that rest for which it craves. God's love and mercy are in very truth incomprehensible; for no two among his creatures are they the same.

And that love and mercy follow us, untiring,

in all our wanderings. The hand which fashioned us is always stretched out over us to save us from ourselves. Progress and civilization have swept away the thought of temporal dependence on the Church; man in his pride has replaced her with newer strongholds in all the practical affairs of life. In times of peace he relegates her to a more or less honourable inactivity, even though in times of war he may promote her to a somewhat more conspicuous position. The reproach most commonly brought against her by those who know her not is that she does not "move with the times," and the reproach is of deep significance. In man, who utters it, it witnesses to his hatred of an immutability to which he cannot shut his eyes. In the Church which accepts it, it witnesses to that eternal mind of God within her which changes not. Our "movements of the times," developments, discoveries—yes, even our wars and all the ruin and the havoc there involved—are as the ripples on the surface of a lake. The wind in which they rise blows at God's will. It rises and it falls, the ripples ebb and flow; man is now intellectual, now material, now subtle, again simple, now brutal and now spiritual, as God allows. But his essence, that which is made in the image of God, remains still and untouched as the depths beneath the shifting surface of the waters. It is with the unchanging deep that the unchanging Church communicates.

How then should she move with the moving ripples, which are, and again are not ?

But though she never changes and can never change, though she has always been and will always be one and the same, she presents different aspects of her might to men at different times. In her is satisfaction for every craving which man can know. No individual, no generation, no age can stretch out hands to her for help and let them fall again unsatisfied. Her resources are inexhaustible, for they flow from the infinite nature of God. She does not need to move in order to keep pace with the times, for He who dwells within her is omniprescient, and no time can find her wanting. In ages past her children asked protection for their threatened lives, their liberty, their rights. She gave them that protection. To-day their need is for a refuge from dangers more intimate, more subtle, and again the Church provides that refuge and gives sanctuary to the hunted spirit of man.

She had only held it in reserve. Among the many wonders of the Divine being of the Church none is more wonderful than this—that her treasures lie, and have lain, always within her, always venerable, always, consciously or unconsciously, venerated. Nothing can be added to her store, for her fulness was perfect from the beginning. But now and again she brings forth from her treasury sometimes one jewel, sometimes another. So it has been with her supreme

treasure. It was always there, blood of the Church's veins, pulse of her life, core of her heart. It was always there. But it was held by the all-seeing providence of God in a mysterious reserve. The thoughts of all men were familiar with it, but their eyes were holden. In one sense the very simplicity of faith made it too easily a fact of life. In another, it inhabited a region which was too remote, and was invested with an atmosphere too full of awe, to support the life of love in any but great saints. That which the Church withheld from her children when, so withheld, it could still supply their every need, to-day she gives them without stint or measure, finding always more and other means through which to lavish upon them something at least of the fulness of the supreme Sacrament of Love.

Among the earliest of these means was that ceremony with which we are now all so familiar under the name of Benediction. To the modern Catholic it is difficult to realize that there was a time when this Blessing by Our Lord's own hand was not so easily or so often to be had. It was not to be had at all in the form in which we can now obtain it so freely that apparently to many of us it seems hardly worth while to go and ask for it, so slight a thing do we allow to hinder us. But that coming forth of Our Lord from His dwelling-place on earth, those few moments

when we may be face to face with Him, that little interview so essentially simple, with whatever pomp it may be invested, so essentially magnificent, however poor the circumstance, testifies with an eloquence wholly irresistible in its silence to the truth that it is indeed His delight to be with the children of men. It is not our delight, blind as we are, to be with Him ! And since this particular coming forth of Our Lord was instituted it has been followed by many others. We have the forty hours' prayer, by which He stands always in one or other of His houses enthroned, asking for our adoration, asking to be allowed to help us ; we have constantly recurring exposition ; we have processions of the Blessed Sacrament. Above all, most recent and most blessed among all gifts imaginable which the Church could give her children, the weakest and the least among us has to-day that which in the past only the saints on earth might have—permission to receive each day into our hearts the Heart of Love itself.

The love of God and the power of God alike are infinite. To say that He has exhausted either would be to deny His nature. But to the mind of man it is impossible to conceive that He should do more or give more than He does for us and gives us now. His presence is among us, strong and tender ; His mind is in our midst, understanding all things. His compassion waits

for us untiring, the only house of refuge we can know. To all the troubled minds and hearts and souls needing the rights of sanctuary to-day, sanctuary is offered. It is found in Our Lord in the tabernacle, in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

CHAPTER II

SANCTUARY FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

"For our wrestling is not with flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 12).

SANCTUARY, then, is here, is waiting for us—sanctuary as real, as tangible to the soul as ever was sanctuary of old to the body of man. Can it be said that this great gift of God is used as it should be used? Can it be said that it is appreciated? Can it be said that by the great majority of us it is even realized?

It was because men feared their foes that they sought sanctuary in the past. Perhaps if we feared our foes to-day we too should seek the offered refuge from them. But to fear an enemy it is necessary that we should first recognize him for what he is, and it is characteristic of many of the enemies of our souls that they can and do come upon us disguised as friends and benefactors. Among these false friends, these most insidious dangers, none is more subtle or more relentless than what can best be described as the spirit of the age.

The spirit of the age is no mere figure of speech. It is something definite, though evading definition, something all-pervading, though it may elude every test but one. Confront it with the Spirit of God, and it stands revealed, shadowy still, perhaps, but a shadowy antagonism. Those who either naturally or by grace have least in common with it are the most conscious of it. Those whom it dominates deny its existence. It meets us everywhere, and everywhere it makes for pain, perplexity, and disturbance if it be resisted; followed, it turns upon its follower at last and utterly destroys him.

Students of history know it. They recognize it as an ever-present factor in human existence, now taking one form, now another, shaping the thoughts, the habits, of mankind in every stage of his development. At this particular moment of the world's history, in the great upheaval of ideas, of motives, of aims, which has for the time being changed life for multitudes, the spirit of the age may seem to be obscured by the spirit of the moment. But it is there, nevertheless. In the spirit of the moment there is much that is good. It sprang into being under the act of God, and though it be not wholly His, it tends towards Him, drawing out qualities in man which are a part of his Divine inheritance—courage, patience, and, above all, self-sacrifice. The spirit of the moment, if we use it as it should be used, if we let God work on us

through it, will leave the world better than it found it, stronger in moral fibre, simpler, less widely estranged from its Maker.

But just because the spirit of the moment makes for good, the spirit of the age, making for evil, will insinuate itself into it sooner or later undermining, poisoning, materializing once more, that which the fire of circumstances is spiritualizing. The spirit of the age pervades at all times all our material existence. And here, as in all its operations, it is nothing if not plausible. To be never at a loss, to be always in the right, to be always ready with a satisfactory explanation is, indeed, one of its marks. It lurks in every one of the ever-developing comforts and luxuries of life, and, challenged, meets the challenger with an air of patronizing superiority. The growing stress of life demands these things, it says. Pressed further, confronted from a spiritual standpoint, it becomes reproachful. Why not? it asks. God gives to man these new facilities, these new pleasures; why should he turn his back upon the good gifts of his Maker?—the question asked of the spirit by the flesh throughout the ages.

In the course of the past eighteen months we have all been reading the book of life by lightning flashes. Now for one man, now for another, some aspect of the situation has proved the veritable pointing of the finger of God, arresting attention, revealing truth. The mist

has been torn away for almost all of us, and we have seen beyond the possibility of doubt that luxury does enervate, that ease does demoralize, and that in the long run some limit must be put to self-indulgence, if man is not to forfeit all that raises him above the level of the beasts. For one moment we stare these facts in the face, conscience-stricken and appalled. But we cannot live by lightning. The flash comes, and is gone again. With that extraordinary adaptability which is inherent in us we become accustomed to new conditions. And one of two things happens. Either we forget altogether that which we have seen, or we apply it to the stage of luxury just beyond our own. The lengths to which we ourselves go are lawful, we consider. It is at the stage beyond that we see pointed the warning finger of God. That which is necessary to ourselves is necessary indeed ; that which is necessary to our more luxurious neighbour is self-indulgence. From the humblest state of life to the highest this pushing onwards of the point where God says, "Stop!" goes on, and by this simple means the lesson which we might have learned is rendered barren. We are not called on to reform our neighbour's life—let us remember that. But on each one of us it lies as our most pressing duty to reform our own. No sooner does a man take this work in hand, however, no sooner does he wrench his reluctant attention from his neighbour's excesses

and apply it to his own case, than he finds himself beset by perplexities innumerable. Just now, indeed, the duty of all good citizens in the matter of luxury is clear. Plain living is the order of the day. This form of temperance the spirit of the age troubles not at all. It simply bides its time. The hard-and-fast rule which binds us at present is created by a temporary necessity. The opportunity of our enemy will come with the inevitable reaction which must follow when necessity relaxes its grip. Our submission to the dictates of the moment is, moreover, not a spiritual submission. Much of it is merely compulsory, much of it, again, is moral, with that simply natural morality which God's goodness implants even in the unbeliever. With action such as this, even though it be in itself right action, there is no need for immediate interference on the part of the foe of our souls.

So long as a man makes no spiritual resistance to the ever-growing demands of nature he goes untroubled. Let him even pause to consider the question before God, and that which lies behind the spirit of the age—the never-resting malice of the enemy of God—is on the alert. The more earnest a man's inquiry, consequently, the greater will be the difficulties. He begins to doubt, let us say, as to the desirability in the sight of God of this or that indulgence, this or that pleasure, in his own life. Where, he asks himself, is his personal line—for he recognizes

that, of course, there is a line—to be drawn? A matter easily decided, as it seemed, before he found himself confronted by the necessity for decision.

Here is no question of high asceticism, be it understood. The case is that of the average son or daughter of the Church who knows that all things are lawful which can be used to God's service, but that for all men all things do not serve alike. At what point, then, does that grateful acceptance of His gifts which is indeed God's due pass into the thankless abuse of them which is an insult to His love? The question, asked in absolute good faith, gives rise to a host of subsidiary questions. Common-sense presents herself, and is hailed as an invaluable ally, with the result that the inquirer finds himself at the last in an absolutely preposterous and untenable position. The spirit of the age has worked against him, and his environment hems him in, pressing upon him on every side. Let him resist, and he must live in bewilderment and uncertainty. Let him yield, and he will be in worse case still. He will soon become easy in his mind; but as his uneasiness is lulled to rest, something else is also being drugged, something of which he will stand one day in dire need.

To most men, as life goes on, come pain and sorrow. To all men, in God's good time, comes death. As that time draws towards him, as ease of body fails, as one after another all the re-

sources of luxury except the last, tried, are found wanting, the supreme necessity for man, if he is to learn the final lesson which his merciful Master tries to teach him before the day of learning ends and the day of reckoning arrives, is fortitude. And fortitude, gift of the Holy Spirit, is given only as it is exercised. To him who has never exercised it, it will not come at call in the hour of need. Meeting that hour without it, men realize the worthlessness of that for which they have bartered it. All the barriers which they have gradually erected between themselves and even the slightest discomfort fall away. The conviction which has gradually taken possession of them that pain is no essential factor in human life, that it can and should be practically eliminated, reveals itself for what it is—an empty dream. They are confronted with the solemn truth that man is born to suffer, and sooner or later his destiny will stand before him in the way, no longer to be evaded or denied. The last resource of civilization there is, indeed. The question of the use and abuse of opiates is not to be argued here. But that they are abused would probably be most readily admitted by those who best appreciate their value. Why is it that year by year it grows more necessary to rob men of what has been called "the last earthly interview between the Creator and the creature"? Why is it that year by year it grows more necessary to let men pass out of

existence unconscious, unaware? It is because they have deprived themselves of that which they have never used—the power of endurance. It will be said, and said with truth, that the present terrible hour is giving every day magnificent exceptions to this rule. Numbers of men are facing death in its most appalling shape with an unflinching courage which could not be surpassed though they had trained for the supreme moment by a lifetime of heroism in little things. But what is this save one more testimony to the unending mercy and power of God—one more testimony which will be wrested by many to the glorification of man? It is as if He could not bring Himself to let His justice take its course, as if His love must always interpose to save us from ourselves. He hurls upon us calamity, as if to overwhelm us, and in the very act He stretches out His hand and touches us, and we leap up, casting ourselves into His very arms. These things He does for man in time of crisis, in great periods of stress and strain. But it is not for us to presume upon His goodness. His law is this: “As a man sows, so shall he reap.” The law is His, and He may choose to abrogate it. Let us not dare to assume that He will do so. Let us set ourselves to live bravely if we would bravely die.

Here, then, in the realm of material things, the spirit of the age stands indeed as our foe, pillaging us of peace, pillaging us of fortitude, a

foe from whom we need protection daily, almost hourly. But if it is a danger here, infinitely more deadly is its presence in the realm of thought. For there it can disguise itself as a veritable angel of light.

It is probably true that hardly any of the great movements which end by openly furthering the designs of the devil fail to take their rise in, or in their progress to pass through, certain phases which, developed on different lines, might have furthered the designs of God. This is merely a restatement of the truth that all things work towards God's glory, if only God be in them; but it is useful to keep it clearly in mind, because it helps to clear away the confusion generated by the fact that evil so often rises out of that which in itself is good.

Most people, speaking on impulse, would say that education is essentially a good, that even to develop the mind, to fill it with knowledge—which is not to educate—is to do something towards the raising of the man. It is strange that this belief should exist in those who hold—either as fact or parable—that with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge there came upon us all the evils of our existence. It is not less inexplicable that those who can look back over the history of the races of mankind, and who, so looking back, can trace no principle of life springing from the spread of knowledge, should still believe that that which never has been will

yet be. Why it is that man never seems to learn from experience we cannot tell. The fact remains that during the past fifty years the word "education" has been a shibboleth before which all ranks of the intelligent, those holding a faith and those holding none, have alike bowed down. The parting of the ways for these two sections came, of course, almost before they had realized that they were at one. To those who study the human being, his needs and his possibilities, eliminating from their study the facts that there is a God and that He has revealed Himself, no just conceptions on the subject of education are possible. To educate means to develop, to draw forth. To draw forth man's intellect, to draw forth even his moral sense, and to leave dormant those spiritual faculties given him in order that he may apprehend his Creator, is to develop an anomaly which may at any time pass into a monstrosity. It is not strange that all the education of the day conducted on these lines fails to justify itself by its results. To look at Germany, true home of the *Zeit Geist*, coiner of its very name, is to realize the depths of moral degradation to which this failure can hurl man. What culture means divorced from God let Belgium witness.

But how is it that much of the education which does indeed aim at really educating fails no less? How is it that so many of those teachers who desire to be true educators have

to stand by and deplore what they cannot change? They are robbed of the fruit of their labours. They cannot tell how it has escaped them. They cannot tell when or where it vanished. The spirit of the age has stolen it from them.

For it is that at which an age aims which determines its spirit, and that at which the age aims will be that at which the majority of men aims. The atmosphere, physical or mental, must be breathed by all alike, and on all alike; if it be tainted, that taint must tell. Those who can pass on their way wholly untouched are few indeed. Men have their way to make in the world, and they have to make it through their dealings with their fellow-men. The man who deals with his fellow-men socially, materially, intellectually, and does not participate in their aims, must be always at a disadvantage, and the instinct to escape from such a position draws him little by little to the assimilation of that ruling principle without which he cannot hold his own.

The aim of the present age is independence— independence is one expression of the spirit of the age. Just now, indeed, we are all “hanging together.” Existence depends upon concerted effort. But when the need that binds looses once more, this spirit will return upon us in tenfold strength if it be not most strenuously resisted. Studying the word independence, con-

sidering the thing signified in the light of its developments, it is difficult to see how it ever came to be invested with a certain virtuous halo. It is difficult to see how it can ever have existed unassociated with pride. The word itself is a foolishness. Man may be independent of this or that. There are many things of which it is well that he should be independent. But independence is not and never can be his, since for his every breath he is dependent upon God. Let his present plight convince him of this, if of nothing else. What the conception is, precisely, which lies behind the word it would be hard to say. Probably it is too chaotic to be susceptible of strict definition, and it owes much of its influence to this elusive character, through which the evil which is its essence evades those who would pin it down and expose it. But if it escapes exposure in itself it is revealed for what it is in its effects and in the use to which it puts the tools, good in themselves, which it takes into its grasp. Education was one of those tools. What use has it made of education? What is it, again, that is working against all efforts at true education?

It is the systematic undermining of the great principle on which man's higher life depends, that principle which is diametrically opposed to all idea of independence—the principle of reverence, with its inevitable corollary, the principle of obedience. "Non serviemus" is

the cry which goes up to-day from all classes, at all ages. Amongst the exponents of the most "advanced" system of education this theory is openly and explicitly advocated. The child is to be taught the use of reason, to rely on reason, and to rely on nothing else. To teach obedience, it is said, is to interfere with the development of the ego. And although this system is not universally accepted, the mere fact that it is boldly promulgated is not without its effect. Even those who wish to deal with their children from a Christian standpoint have an uneasy sense that they must not allow themselves to be behind the times, that their children must be prepared to meet their fellows on equal terms, and that they must be permitted to develop, in youth, that temper of mind on which their future success may depend. They do not realize what it is that they are sacrificing to secure that development. They forget that we are told of our Master and Example in His relation with His earthly parents that "He was subject to them." Children are not subject to their parents nowadays—parents are rather subject to their children. The thing is often said with a laugh, but there is truth in it.

It is a deadly truth, because it points to misconception as to one of the fundamental conditions of existence. It must lead to disaster, because God's ordinances cannot be lightly reversed.

Sooner or later, as we pass on our way through life, obedience is exacted of every one of us. We may give it to God of our own free will, and only of our own free will, since He will not compel us. We may give it to, or it will be wrested from us by, His enemy. Is it too much to say that on the training which the little child receives will depend, to a great extent at least, which of the two—his Creator or his would-be destroyer—becomes his lord in life and death? If he is taught to know no will higher than his own in youth, is it not at least probable that he will have no time or disposition in after life to discover and submit to such a will? His lord will have to claim him; he will never claim his Lord. If he is taught—indirectly, possibly, but not less certainly—that his convenience, his advantage, his pleasures, are of paramount importance, the lesson may endow him with that self-confidence and self-assertion which are considered such essential weapons in the battle for material gain. Will it advance him in the school of Him who said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart"? If he is allowed to acquire a habit of taking all and giving nothing, he will acquire also a facility in looking after his own interests which will serve him well in business. It will not draw him near to One who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Yet who that has watched family life as it is

to-day can fail to see that these are the principles which parents, in an unwise personal devotion to what they believe to be their children's interests, do actually encourage? The idea is not necessarily expressed—it is in the atmosphere. Some future advantage is always in view to which the present is made subservient. But what conceivable compensation can there be in after life for the deep-seated selfishness of youth thus brought up? Those who thus regulate their conduct as parents do not realize that their own misjudged self-abnegation deprives their children of that which has been pronounced to be the greater blessing, in taking from them, possibly for ever, the power of giving. Let even children sacrifice something. Let them do it while they are children, or they may never come in after years to offer that supreme homage of man to God. Let them sacrifice, even if that which they give must needs be something which their parents would wish that they might keep. Let the girl give up some of her lessons and learn the greater lesson of sympathy and consideration as she helps her mother. Let the boy do without some of his superfluous pocket-money and feel something of what it means to his father to give it to him. The children of to-day are greatly blessed. They are being formed in an hour when self-sacrifice is in the air. Great deeds, great sufferings, strenuous exertions for a cause and not for self, surround

them. No one is ashamed to admire the heroic. No man scorns his neighbour's finer impulses. The love of country is one of the nobler passions of the race, and the love of country is the passion of the moment. But love of country, inspiring and ennobling though it be, is not the highest. Nearer to God than love of country rises the love of parents. Let boy and girl alike learn in time what love of parents really means. Let them realize, while they may, that they owe to their father and mother something other than a sentimental affection, a patronizing regard—they owe them gratitude, they owe them reverence, they owe them obedience.

An old-fashioned doctrine this, truly. It will sound almost laughable, perhaps. But the fourth commandment speaks from an older fashion yet, and it has never been repealed by God—only made void by man.

CHAPTER III

SANCTUARY FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE— *continued*

" And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one but only Jesus " (St. Matt. xvii. 8).

THERE is another development of the spirit of the age to which what goes by the name of education has rendered invaluable aid. Forty or fifty years ago what was called the higher education of women was hailed as heralding a sort of regeneration of the race. Women were informed that their poor neglected brains were to be cultivated at last, that they were to be made rational beings after centuries of dim existence, and that they might in time hope to become "companions" instead of "playthings" to men. The wise woman of that generation smiled quietly and held her peace—which is the mark of the wise woman. She knew that woman is not made rational by learning, but by that deep experience of life which comes from the fulfilment of its duties. She knew that woman, as God made her, is more than man's

companion—she is his complement. She held her peace, and her daughters attended lectures, passed examinations, and went to universities. Then, when they had acquired much knowledge, one of two things happened. Those to whom she had transmitted her finer qualities came back to her. They came back openly if life brought them a woman's destiny, and forgot the learning they had borrowed from books as they bought a deeper learning of love. They came back less obviously if life did not deal thus with them, but they came back nevertheless. Those in whom her finer qualities had suffered deterioration never came back. They took another road. They shaped for themselves an ideal, shadowy at first and beautiful, but in its realization very far remote from her who stands for Catholics the type of perfect womanhood.

There has been great jubilation over the development of woman, great contempt has been poured upon our grandmothers with their flower-paintings, their warblings and strummings on the piano, their tears and their fainting-fits. But were they really such much poorer creatures than are the women of to-day? Are hockey and bridge such immensely ennobling occupations? Do nervous diseases of all sorts and kinds indicate a higher state of physical or moral fitness than the "vapours" of a hundred years ago? Take a modern novel and a novel of the past, and compare the women.

The superficial contrast, immense though it be, is not so striking as the underlying similarity. The woman of good sense and charm in those days ordered her life with dignity and grace, and all about her felt her influence—the woman of good sense and charm to-day can do no more. The silly woman of those days gossipped and chattered, reducing everything she touched to her own poor level—the silly woman of to-day does just the same.

Two points there are which may be noted to the credit of the past. In the first place, it was much rarer then than now to find the higher type of woman destitute of faith. Whether it be that her learning has stopped short just before the point at which the truly wise recognize the great unknowable, whether it be part of that breaking away from old tradition which like a tempestuous wave has in the past half century temporarily swept womanhood off her feet, the fact remains that it is in the ranks of this higher type of woman—cultivated, thoughtful, sympathetic, the modern woman at her best—that the multitude of hungry seekers are to be found: seekers after food for the starved soul which never ceases to stir and cry within them, seekers after that of which their need tells them this only—that it exists. In the second place, the silly woman of to-day has a much larger field than her predecessor in which to do harm, because she has added to her unlovely traits

that of self-assertion. She boldly interferes with matters of importance instead of confining herself to her personal trivialities, and confuses serious issues by a torrent of words, meaningless, but arresting attention by reason of its noise.

And now the woman of fifty years ago, who saw herself kindly patronized and put aside, who saw the "higher education" of her daughters and some of its results, sees her grandchildren go to school. And she sees that same higher education confessed a failure, more or less, inasmuch as the education of girls to-day has taken another line. Muscular development is the craze of the moment. The development of brains not having been attended by the unqualified success which was expected, it is thought that that which is lacking can be supplied from the physical side. Manly virtues as well as manly muscles are to be cultivated, we are told, by the playing of manly games. The girls' school which has its "games mistress," where cricket and hockey and so forth are obligatory, will have a higher standard of honour and courage than the girls' school which merely danced and played croquet or lawn-tennis. That there is a substratum of truth in these assertions no one would deny, and it is this very fact which makes them dangerous. For that substratum has long been worked out. There is a middle course between taking no exercise and taking violent exercise—which extreme is likely to be

worse where women are concerned let those who know decide. There is a middle course between that total lack of comprehension of the manly virtues with which women have been credited and a wholesale scorn for womanliness. But this middle course can only be struck on high ground; it is no affair of games, or lessons, or even of the character of school discipline. It is an affair of the soul.

The spirit of the age, however, has only one concern with the soul—to undermine it to its destruction. And in everything that is done and said to-day with regard to the education of women the spirit of the age breathes, since everything makes for, and assumes as her highest good, the independence of woman.

How far women are to proceed along this road, to what extent the anomaly involved is to be developed, are questions which only time can answer. To what extent their position will be influenced by the crisis of national life through which we are passing is another problem not to be solved at present. That it will certainly be immensely influenced either for good or evil cannot be doubted. Through the present circumstances, either the spirit of the age will strengthen its hold, or the spirit of God will move upon the face of the waters. We may hope, we may confidently believe, that the spirit of God will conquer. Woman to-day is at her very best, rising in individuals, rising in the

mass, near to the ideal. She is man's companion now, in truth. She is his companion in the highest act of which he is capable—the act of sacrifice. He gives his life, she gives that which is more to her than life. Her spirit is behind him, as his strength is given to guard her. He fights—she suffers, prays, and does his work at home. Surely in this great partnership of self-devotion the cloud of misconception, the poisonous fog which has been rising round the relations between man and woman, must disappear. Man will have gained a new view of his obligations, woman a new understanding of her power—that power which is neither physical nor mental, but wholly spiritual. Behind the just relations of the sexes is the law of God. It is not strange, therefore, that the enemy of God should be always busy about it, tempting now man, now woman, promising great things, urging the one to tyranny, whispering to the other of revolt. But the ideal never changes. God brings us back to it over and over again. We are getting a glimpse of it to-day. It is for women—women who must always, in the long run, mould the race—to see to it that this glimpse broadens into a fuller gaze.

But, like all important social questions, that of the position of women in the twentieth-century world presents a material as well as an intellectual problem.

The independence of woman has an economic

side which throws the whole matter into inextricable confusion. The preponderance of women over men, numerically, is immense. There is consequently a large section of woman-kind which must either be dependent on man in a false sense, inasmuch as it rests upon him as a burden, with no possibility of give and take between them, or dependent on its own exertions—independent, in short. A large and always increasing proportion of these women in all classes is now upon the labour market, with dire economic results. That the problem which they present is even in course of being solved few people, probably, would be rash enough to assert. Its complications are, in fact, being hugely increased by the necessities of the moment, to which women have so promptly and devotedly responded. That its solution is of incalculable importance no one can deny. It is easy enough to say that women should be this, that, or the other. Looking out upon life as we have made it, we cannot fail to see that for the majority of women the following of the right road presents obstacles which must almost be pronounced insuperable. The more closely the problem is studied, the more intricate do its difficulties become; the more ardently the true progress of woman is desired, the more discouraging is the consideration of her present position. On the one hand stands the law of God, on the other the circumstances of life; on

the one hand stands the ideal of womanhood which issued from the mind of the Creator, on the other the world which casts the ideal out, the world in which we live, the world with which we have to reckon at every turn. These things cannot be reconciled, neither can they be ignored. Does God, then, ask of part of His creation that which is impossible? We know that He does not. We know that any set of circumstances, any chain of reasoning, which leads to such a supposition must be essentially vicious, essentially false. We know this, and in the dead-lock which confronts us here we know with certainty nothing more.

What an enemy, then, is this that we find menacing us at every turn of our intellectual and social life, this spirit of the age which makes good evil and evil good, which puts sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet, which will bring us, if it can, to question whether indeed there be a law which is unchanging and a Law-giver who is unchangeable! For it is to this end that the spirit of the age always tends. It breathes upon our material life, it taints our intellectual and social existence, but it is when it begins to poison our relation with God that it is most surely achieving the end for which it is let loose upon us.

Its action outside the Church is patent. The first effect of independence upon the great majority has been the casting off of all assump-

tion of a religious faith which, founded upon unreality, had lost vitality. What may be called the sabbatarian spirit had held Protestant England in a grip of iron for nearly three hundred years, striving to replace in a national character essentially religious that which was wrenched from it in the sweeping away of Catholicism. But even the sabbatarian spirit had its root in submission, if only in submission to public opinion, and when public opinion no longer nourished it, it died. The outward ceremonies of religion ceased to be a conventional necessity, and immediately it became apparent that all that had once lived behind them was for the majority no longer existent. About this there is, of course, nothing that is surprising, nothing to be deplored. That which is indeed dead should not deceive by any simulation of life. But with the casting aside of that which was false there has come about no general movement towards that which is true. The multitude drifts always further and further from God, because the spirit of independence is wholly at variance with that spirit whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

Not for non-Catholics alone does the danger exist. Always throughout the ages there has lived in the Church, immovably opposed to the rebellious mind of man, a principle of unalterable authority. Never can there have been an age more utterly at variance with that principle than

is the present day. We are expected to sit loose to our moorings to-day, because the fashion of thought changes so quickly, and we must change with it. We think this to-day and that to-morrow, and, unbound by any trammels of conventionality, we act on our momentary convictions as suits our momentary convenience. We conduct all the external affairs of life on these fluid principles, and then we pass into that interior region where our religion reigns.

But we pass in as we have made ourselves—or as we have allowed the spirit of the age to make us—and, confronted with the rock, the unstable water reveals itself for what it is. In the presence of immutability we are oppressed, and our impulse is to push away that which oppresses us. Here is no question of those terrible underminings of faith which may go on unsuspected in a man until the whole falls into ruin at a touch. It is a matter of small evasions, of little rebellions, of superficial criticisms. We allow ourselves to say of certain forms of discipline that they are survivals of a bygone day; of certain regulations that they open the door to abuses; of the sayings and doings of ecclesiastical authorities—even of him who holds for us the place of Christ Himself—that they are ill-judged. The fact that there may be a modicum of truth in our views, judged from a human standpoint, makes our difficulties greater—it does not make our case the better.

Granted that the laws of fasting and abstinence—to take one instance—were made for a generation very different in physique from the generation of to-day, this is no reason for thinking lightly of them. Rather should it be a source of humiliation that we cannot give to God as our forefathers gave, a source of anxiety lest we should fail to seek with sufficient care for that which we can give; lest, having found it, we should fail to give it with that abundance of love which in His pitiful eyes atones for the poverty of all that we can offer. Granted again—to take one of those “new” regulations as to which everyone, apparently, considers himself at liberty to differ from authority—granted that there are some who cannot free themselves from a touch of doubt in connection with the communion of the very young. To those who feel this doubt, the day of their own first communion stands out, perhaps, against a life of storm and stress bathed in a radiance utterly divine. It is most natural that they should fear lest those who pass into that radiance now, almost as babies, too young, it seems, to realize, should have to go through all their after lives without that treasure of remembrance. But let those whom these fears trouble keep silence about them. Let them take them to the Good Shepherd who is surely caring for the lambs. Let them give some proof of confidence in the shepherd who feeds

them for Him on earth. The spirit of criticism is never far away from the spirit of independence, and to the spirit of criticism nothing and no one is sacred — not even the Vicar of Christ himself. "These things are not of faith," men say when they bring their worldly prudence to bear on words and actions which should be judged—if judged they are to be—on widely different lines. "Popes, when they do not speak *ex cathedra*, are as other men, liable to make mistakes. We obey, of course. It does not follow that we agree. We are not bound to think that all they say and do is right," etc.

We are not bound! Are we to give no more than we are bound to give? Is the limit of our obligation to be the limit of our loyalty and our love for him on whom rests indeed the burden and heat of the day—a burden such as we cannot even understand? Is it the part of a faithful soldier to carp at his general in trifles, to carry out his minor orders under protest? What sort of preparation is it for blind obedience in the day of battle to have acquired a habit of questioning and condemning in the day of small things? There are those who look upon themselves as broad-minded, because they do not hesitate to see and speak when they might turn away their eyes and be silent. Let these beware lest a day come when criticism finds itself face to face with obligation. On their own heads would it rest if the spirit

of filial submission which they have so continually outraged should fail them in the hour of their need.

Nor is it only in matters such as these that the spirit of the age touches our relations with God. Its taint goes deeper still, to the very foundations of spiritual life. Its "note," to use a phrase of the moment, is incessant occupation. We must be always doing, always striving. We must be here and there, cramming our lives with toil, with pleasure, with interests innumerable. He who says "Enough" brands himself a sluggard. And when every hour has been made to yield the work of two hours, when nerves and brains and muscles have paid their full toll and more, when all the demands of daily life have been met, what is there left for the Maker and Giver of these gifts which we use and abuse from morning till night and from night till morning—what is there left for God? In these things themselves is the service of God, we are told sometimes—to labour is to pray surely no other great truth is so twisted to the service of the father of lies. Labour may indeed be prayer. No action is too small to honour God if it be undertaken to that end. But labour will not be prayer unless the thought of God and the love of God are recognized as having a claim upon a definite part of our lives—unless we pray, indeed. We are commanded by our Lord to pray, we are taught by the

saints to pray, we are adjured from the pulpit and in the confessional to pray, and we treat all these voices—divine no less than human—with the contempt of heedlessness. We say of our Lord's precepts that they were meant for canonized saints; we say of the example of the saints that they are not to be followed by ordinary humanity; we say of the representations of our priests that they are the utterances of the professional. We do not dream of acting on them. To give one hour out of the twenty-four to God would be for multitudes almost impossible under the circumstances of life as we have made it; it would mean little short of a revolution of existence. That it would mean, indeed, a revolution of existence in another sense few understand. To give even half an hour is difficult, difficult not from the point of view of time, since there are very few lives in which this little space could not be spared—spared to the Lord of time and eternity, who will accept even this triviality from our reluctant and ungenerous hands! But difficult because the spirit of the age, bereft of one stronghold, entrenches itself in another. God will accept its leavings, such minutes as it can spare. Therefore it will make even those minutes, if it can, impossible. The spirit of the age will see to it that we cannot, even when we would, turn our thoughts to God; we cannot shut out the crowd that presses upon us, the noises that

distract us—the crowd and the noises that are for ever moving and clamouring within us. At our worst, we speedily become impatient even of the attempt. At our best, Satan is instantly at our ear suggesting that such distracted prayer is no prayer at all, that it insults Him to whom we pretend to offer it. Worst or best, the result is the same—we are separated from God.

We are separated from God. To this final calamity the spirit of the age, working silently, subtly, now in one guise, now in another, has brought us. We see it at last for what it is—a power utterly and wholly malignant, a power destructive not only of our peace, of our stability, but of our very life, since, separated from God, there is no life but only living death.

And here, when it seems to have conquered, God meets it. When everything else fails, the primal fundamental instinct planted in man for his salvation wakes. The sense of weakness, rooted in our nature, reveals itself for what in truth it is, the gift of God. The frightened, shivering, desolate soul cries unceasingly in each one of God's children who has lost the knowledge of his birthright—cries now with one voice, now with another. Men who have nothing left to wish for that the world can give them live from day to day dissatisfied. Men who have filled their lives with work, who are important, influential, successful, crave in their hearts only for peace. No one of all the crowd which hurries here

and there, driven of the wind, but longs in every fibre of his being for something which he has not.

And necessity is always master of the situation. The soul, seeing itself pressed upon, utterly helpless, in need of sanctuary as dire as ever was the need of threatened fugitive in days gone by, clamours for refuge, for protection, and its cry goes up to God.

The need is spiritual—the sanctuary is spiritual also. It is offered to all. It is offered freely. The one condition is precisely that which was the condition for obtaining the material sanctuary of old. Believing in its power, men must go and claim it. It would have availed a hunted wretch nothing to come even within reach of the sanctuary knocker if in ignorance or incredulity he had failed to raise his hands to grasp it. It will avail us nothing that safety waits for us if we will not pass into its sheltering stillness. Granted that one step on our part, that one step taken in faith, and all the rest is done for us by God who asks so little, always, that He may give so much. Not one of us to-day, pleading our desire and our need, showing in all sincerity the feeblest effort to fulfil God's will, will be denied the supreme gift of God to man. The right to receive our Lord in very truth is ours daily, if we will but claim it. But that great gift is medicine, food, the most mysterious essence of spiritual existence. If

God had given us that, coming to us thus once in the day, to leave us afterwards until the moment for His coming should return again, we must have adored His goodness, marvelled at His love, and never dreamed that He could give us more. That miracle would have seemed so utterly transcendent that nothing further could have been conceived by man.

But something further was conceived by God. God, who knows His poor creature, knows that in his little troubled life a day may be as years, knows that his necessities are hourly—nay, of the moment—knows his utter helplessness, and has desired to be beside him always. And so He has ordained that man may find Him when he will. That man may never wait, He waits for man. That man may never seek for rest in vain, God rests not day or night. That man may not know loneliness, our Lord is lonely in the tabernacle day after day, week after week, year in, year out. If it were possible that we should see into the bottomless abyss of our incomprehension of the love of God, surely our attitude towards the Presence in the tabernacle might give us at least some shuddering glimpse into those depths. We believe that in the solitude of every church we pass is God Himself. We believe that He is there, loving us, waiting for us. And with a coldness and an indifference which we should think shame to show to any earthly monarch we—let Him wait! Could we

not, all of us, just once a day, just for five minutes, go in to Him? Could we not let Him know—He is so glad to know it, He asks so little to convince Him—that He is not there in vain, that though we are very busy, and have many other things to think of, we do, nevertheless, appreciate His presence, that we are glad to feel that He is there? The patience of God, like all the attributes of His unspeakable essence, is beyond our comprehension. The patience of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament comes home to us through His Sacred Humanity as something more intimate, more tender, something which we cannot, truly, understand, but which appeals to that within us which can sympathize with it. It is one of the claims of our Lord upon our love that He lets us sympathize with Him. And that patience, unwearying, uncomplaining, unrewarded, if we would only stop and think of it, would go to our very hearts.

He is our Sanctuary. To go to Him once, harassed, at bay, all but in despair, to go to Him believing, is to go to Him always. The soul in His presence is at home at last, finds peace and is quiet. And peace passes also from the infinite peace into the troubled mind, the working brain, even to the weary body. We lift up our eyes and see only Jesus, and to see Him thus, even if it be but for one moment, is to see all things else in just proportion. The spirit of the age, confronted with that vision,

stands stripped of glamour, of charm, of beauty—and stripped also of strength. It is of time, and it avails nothing. It is of time, and with time will pass away. But we, children of God, created in God's own image, we are of eternity, and we know that those things alone are vital which are eternal. It is into the light eternal that we pass in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; into the light eternal which, lest it should blind us, comes to us softened and adapted to our weakness through our Lord who bore our nature. Because He is God He knows our nature. But because He was man we feel that He knows it.

It is with our nature in its entirety that He is concerned. He does not want only man's moments of devotion, the best and happiest moments of the soul. He wants us most when we need Him most—when we are most earthly, when it seems almost as if the spirit of the age had captured us, when we are on the verge of slavery, when already we can hardly think or see or speak except as our conqueror dictates. He wants our confidence when we have nothing else to give Him—no love, no praise, no thanks. He wants to be allowed to rescue us when we hardly care whether we are rescued or no. Not once only, but over and over again, at any moment, that sanctuary is open to us. It is always there, even as our difficulties are always there. It is always there, even as our weakness is always

there. It is always there, even as our necessity is always there. We have only to pass under its protection, and there to wait and let God act.

He will not always solve our problems, but we can leave them in His hands unsolved. In His presence every weapon that would assail us falls powerless. They may clash above our heads, our enemies may clamour round us, but we have taken sanctuary, and they know it. They cannot touch us. Let us be still and rest. We are in the hands of God, and we need move no more. Let us be quiet. God will speak. We bring Him our material perplexities—how must we live, where should we refrain, where may we enjoy?—and they fall into line in the presence of His Humanity. We bring Him our intellectual difficulties, our uncertainties, our fears; and we learn to wait the explanation in the light of His divinity. We come with the cloud about us which hides the face of God, and it melts in the glow of His love.

CHAPTER IV

SANCTUARY FROM SORROW

" A man shall be as a hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the wind " (Isa. xxxii. 2).

MANY and various were the ways by which men fled to sanctuary in days of old. Sometimes it was by night, by steep and broken hill paths, with the blinding snow threatening, moment by moment, to wipe out every landmark, drifting into an impassable barrier. Sometimes it was by day, stealing from covert to covert by rough, untrodden ways, by bogs and rocks, crouching, listening, lest the foe so hardly shaken off should again be on the heels of the hunted. Sometimes the fugitive was wounded, each step was made in pain, and the track was marked by his blood. Sometimes he had been long a captive, and had escaped to hide and wander, starving, until very weakness threatened to take from him his last hope. But always, however rough or steep the road, however fierce the battle with the storm, however heavy the weight of pain or weakness, he must struggle on or perish. His life must

pay the forfeit if he failed to reach the haven towards which his despairing thought leaped, outstripping far his feeble, halting steps, which even at the swiftest seemed so slow.

To-day, also, many and various are the roads by which men come to the sanctuary of souls. For some the way is short and steep, and they are swept along it on the wings of fear. For some the dread of that which drives is lost in the desire for that which draws, and love, unsatisfied and restless, urges them, and is at once their suffering and their joy. For some the way is long and winding, so tedious and unending, that they would stop and turn aside but for the cold weight of dread at their hearts which tells them that they dare not. Sometimes the track is clear and plain to see, sometimes there seems to be indeed no track, no means of winning through the obstacles which present themselves. No man may direct another, except in merest outline, for each man knows in detail only the path which is his own.

But there is one way which is always sure and always clear, on which no man can miss his road, because there is a Guide who goes before him; on which no man need fall helpless, though his painful steps may stumble heavily, because that Guide will hold him up. The way of the cross, so rough and hard to tread, the way of the cross, on which we can never take one single step alone, because it is the way of our Lord,

the way of the cross, in which our feet are never set but by the all-loving will of God, is the one short and direct path by which we may come to sanctuary, for it is the way of the cross which leads us straight to the heart of Jesus. This is a truism, since every Catholic knows it. It is not for all of us the mighty truth which it is in its essence. But in this hour of the world's dire distress, in this hour when multitudes of men and women are finding themselves turned, suddenly and without warning, from the smoother ways of life into the mysterious road of agony, when there are broken hearts and ruined lives on every side—covering their wounds, hiding the ruins, it may be, with a fortitude beyond praise—in this dark hour, above all other hours, do we not fail to recognize God's tender providence for us if we fail to make this truth part of our very being? God's love for the children He chastises never fails. If we could only really trust that love, we could meet the bitterest life, the most appalling death, and look each in the face without dismay.

All the truths of God are mystical, inasmuch as there must always remain in every one of them depths unfathomable. But there are some which ask of the majority of mankind worship which need not realize or try to realize. And there are others by which our Father speaks to our practical necessities, makes appeal to that instinct towards personal effort, individual exertion, which He has planted in the nature of man ;

truths which He wills shall become ours not only through faith, but through experience.

Such a mystery lies hidden in "the royal road of the Holy Cross."

It is protected, as are many of the hidden things of God, by a surface aspect of even bald simplicity. That it is, in truth, a mystery is a fact which it is possible to pass over. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me," said Our Lord to His Apostles, and a little later He showed them in His own person what that saying meant. Christianity may be said to be founded on the sufferings of Christ. It is impossible to have any practical part in the religion of the Crucified without accepting the cross as a fundamental element of life. That the disciple must be as his Master is a principle which no one questions. It is when we come to consider the different shapes in which this acceptance of the cross clothes itself in different men—or in the same man at different times—that we realize that the matter is not so simple as it seems. At one end of the scale there are those of us who adore the cross on Good Friday, and wriggle from under it all the rest of the year; who assent to the proposition that through many tribulations we come to the Kingdom of God, but have an inarticulate hope and expectation of getting there without these unpleasant preliminaries. At the other end are those who live in that spirit which breaks

out in St. Andrew's cry of joy as he came at last within sight of the desire of his heart : " Hail, O holy Cross !" And between the two are grades innumerable.

What is it that makes the difference ? What is it that can turn that which is in itself a source of pain and fear into a very well-spring of peace and spiritual joy ? It is the grace of God, and His grace only, and saying this we find ourselves at once in contact with the infinite, the incomprehensible. One man by grace has penetrated more or less deeply, as his joy is greater or less, into the heart of the mystery of the cross ; the other man remains looking at the surface. All the difference is there.

God gives His grace to all. But different graces, it would seem, must be obtained in different ways. This grace, so deeply to be desired, this grace which transforms life, is among those priceless gifts of God which must be worked for. It must be developed by individual effort, by personal exertion. It will grow, infallibly, as we correspond to it, and not otherwise. Wonderful among the many wonders of God's dealings with us is this continual drawing forth from us, this continual demand made by Omnipotence of weakness for co-operation. Before the mystery of free-will we have all of us many times abased ourselves. That the Creator of all things, the All-Wise, the All-Powerful, should leave His creatures free to choose Him

or reject Him at their petty pleasure is a truth as awful as it is incomprehensible. But perhaps we do not so often realize all that is involved in the fact that Power expands itself in helping helplessness to help itself. To consider this carefully is to take hold of a plumb-line by which we may just begin to sound the upper waters of the bottomless ocean of God's patience. He has made us thinking, active beings, and He wishes all our faculties to develop into that likeness in which they are made. Therefore, He gives us scope, and waits on us, if we may say so, guiding us, supporting us with a touch here and a touch there, while we flounder and stumble and stray at every opportunity. The love that gives and gives only, taking nothing in return, in the end enervates the beloved. Therefore, God's love, which is before all things strengthening, inspiring, vitalizing, asks of us, even though it must first give that for which it asks. It is only the saints who realize that in the demand it makes, not less than in the wealth which it bestows, lies hidden the measure of the divine love.

Merely to acknowledge, then, that the way of the cross is the way to the heart of our Lord is of little practical use to us. To believe in theory that the road of the cross leads to sanctuary is not to come thither. The road must be traversed, the way must be learned step by step, winding by winding, stone by stone. This is a hard saying. We shrink from it in every fibre

of our nature. We long to contradict it, to stop our ears. We cannot bear it.

We could not bear it, truly, but for this.

Our Lord's feet trod out that road. They trod it, not spared one step, from end to end, stumbling and failing even as our feet stumble and fail, bleeding as our feet bleed. Before He passed the road was not; only a pathless wilderness, a trackless desert, stretched before the sufferer. The way was made by Jesus. By His life on earth, through His human nature, He has touched with His divinity all the conditions of that nature. He has glorified and sanctified its limitations, its capacities, its joys. But nowhere does the light He shed upon it shine so clearly as upon its sufferings, and therefore there is no path through life so luminous in its darkness as the way of the cross.

It is suggested to us by the Church that we should do well to go with Him from time to time in our devotions along the bitter way He took, pausing where He paused, following as He moved on, and so remembering, as far as we may, what that journey really meant. The Church gives few suggestions to her children, as she gives few commands. The many helps, the many means indicated to us for the stirring up and fortifying of our feeble wills, come to us adapted to this age or that, to this state of life or to that, out of the experience of individual teachers, saints, and confessors; and such helps

and means prove themselves by degrees, acquiring at last the dignity of tried utility. Some of these the Church has made peculiarly her own, pointing us now to one, now to another, as to a never-failing spring which has its source in the great waters which flow from the throne of God. She points silently. Her wisdom knows that the value of such helps cannot be brought home to us by words, but by experience alone. She points, and leaves us free, with a full and generous freedom such as can be known only under a supreme authority. It is characteristic of a petty power that it is never at rest. It dare not enforce, therefore it is always at work to entrap, to give to hints the weight of obligation, to make a law of custom. But to the majesty of the Church such subterfuges are unknown. She commands, and her commands are inviolable. Against them there is and can be no appeal. Therefore her commands are few and simple, and therefore outside those commands there is no disquieting atmosphere of half-felt coercion, but that absolute liberty which makes of every acceptance of the opportunities she offers a free-will act of love. For the Church is most of all at one with God who is within her in this—that in accepting gifts from her we please her best.

In every house of God the Stations of the Cross hang round the walls. They are not there as decorations. They are there witness-

ing to the beautiful assumption of the Church that we all come to her as little children, since they offer the simplest and most elementary form of help to the imagination and the heart. No soul of good-will, however mentally incapable of sustained effort, can make the Stations with devout intention without finding herself at the close a little nearer to the Lord she has followed. But it is characteristic of the Church that nothing which she gives us is for one section of her children only. She is for all, and everything that is of her is for all. As each man heard the new-born Church at Pentecost speak in the language which he could understand, so each man hears her now. For one she speaks in words simple and plain, as if uttered to a child. For another the same words hold mysterious depths which never can be sounded. And this divine attribute is especially characteristic of the devotion of the Stations. For the spiritually uneducated it is simplicity itself. It develops in proportion to that which is brought to bear upon it.

In Lent a special invitation is given us to avail ourselves of that which lies behind the presence of those fourteen pictures in our churches in the public making of the Stations which are generally part of the Lenten services. But perhaps the spirit of this devotion is too intimate and of too individual a nature to work freely in its public exercise, or surely those

who make it thus in Lent would be drawn on to make it often throughout the year. It seems not unlikely that there may be many to whom the help hidden here is not known, because it has not occurred to them to practise it privately and continuously. Looked at even from a surface point of view, it is an act of humility and love involving a little time, a little effort. And we all know that not one of these things can be given to God without drawing from Him tenfold in return. Of its depths it is not necessary to speak, because each soul finds there something different, something which is for itself alone. But if the living Presence in the tabernacle goes with us as we follow with love, compassion, and contrition the path It trod on earth—as It always will if we desire Its company—It will teach us in our silent progress lessons which will sink at last even into our hard, cold hearts, drawing our rebellious wills into something less at variance with Itself. And when, the journey done, we come back again to the tabernacle and to the feet of Him who dwells there, we shall come back, if only for a moment, not quite the same. We shall be a little nearer to Him—not always perhaps with sensible devotion, but in desire and resolution. Our own way of the Cross will seem a little easier because of His. We shall know a little better how to tread it, seeing how He trod His. We shall be less reluctant, less afraid.

But this following of our Lord, sacred and beautiful though it may be made, is a following in the imagination only. It belongs to the region of prayer. It must be classed with the aids to devotion, and among such aids each one must choose for himself. To some this appeals, to some it does not appeal. It is not essential. The way of the Cross which runs through life, the way of the Cross which is actual as contrasted with the way of the Cross which is mental—this lies before each one of us. But even here, though there is no escape, there is a choice before us. We may pass along that way bravely and willingly, following our Lord in very deed. Or we may cast ourselves down upon it, wasting our lives in useless lamentation.

God sends His messengers to us in many shapes. No day draws to its close but we have met, and turned away perhaps, from one or more than one, only our angel knowing. Two of these messengers, two of the most potent, two of the most terrible, are very busy in the world just now, bearing His word to millions—the angels of Sorrow and Pain. Stern presences they are, God's pickets, who find us wandering, in danger, possibly, from some unsuspected foe, and force us to seek sanctuary even against our will; searchers of the heart, revealers of hidden thoughts, confronted with whom the human and the divine in man, always at war, realize in a lightning flash that it is war to the death. Whether

we see in Sorrow and Pain enemies or friends depends on this and this alone: do we behold them with our human eyes, dark and forbidding strangers, or does that within us which is of God rise up and recognize them as our brothers?

They are in truth the brothers of the soul, its best friends, its truest guardians. But we cannot always know them for what they are, because the dust and tumult of the strife within us which their presence raises blinds and deafens us. They are the sworn enemies of that earthly self which is so strong in every one of us, and they become terrible only when that self, dragging down the soul, casts us at their feet in impotent defiance and despair, and will not let us take the path to which they urge us. For in that hour there can be no compromise, none of that give-and-take between the soul and self into which we drift with such a fatal ease when life goes smoothly with us. Day after day that compromise goes on, self yielding something to the soul to lull her into quiet and inertia, the soul yielding something to self, as the weaker yields to the stronger, for the sake of peace. Only the enemy who insinuates that compromise, and the sorrowing angel who records it, know whither it is tending, until the day when God in His mercy sends that into our lives which makes a cleavage once for all and sets weak and strong irreconcilably confronted one with the other.

Then, and only then, we know what the long truce has done for us. Let sorrow touch us, and the veils of torpor and tepidity in which we have wrapped ourselves shrivel away, and we realize that little by little self has gained ground which the soul has lost, self has gained energy and the soul is proportionately enfeebled, self is the master and the soul the slave. The love of earth has grown and strengthened till it is more, immensely more, to us than the love of Heaven.

How much depends upon our action in the cold moment when this dawns upon us again only the Guardian who stretches out His hand to help us, and the foe who tries to drag us down, may know. If there is any vigour, any initiative left to the soul, if it has still the force to fight, the conflict must be agonizing. Self, taken by surprise, amazed at finding its authority defied, reinforced by all the resources sent to its aid by the supreme enemy of the soul, conscious at last that only one of those who have seemed to walk together as yoke-fellows can now survive, throws itself into the combat with a strength which becomes more desperate as the soul finds means to hold its own. In proportion to the importance of the struggle is its bitterness. In proportion to the power which it enjoyed is the dismay of the self which realizes that it is about to be dethroned, bound, and slain. Is it to be doubted that from this

fiercely resisting, writhing, struggling self we need the rights of sanctuary, when pain and sorrow meet us in the way, as sorely as we can ever need it in our lives? For if we cannot find a refuge, if the soul is beaten in the fight, we turn His angels from God's messengers to God's avengers. Great sorrow leads us to Him, or it hides from us our Father's face.

And that hiding of our Father's face is a calamity which, though by His mercy it may pass, can hardly pass and leave no trace upon our lives. It may pass, because God is so good that He has appointed for those who will not have Him for their Physician another healer—time. The mysterious hand of time salves our wounds—even the deepest—so thoroughly and so entirely that even the soul which has been utterly worsted in the struggle, which has rebelled and denied, and neither sought nor found sanctuary, may readjust itself gradually and imperceptibly, may come back to its Father's presence and take up its relation with Him once more. But it may be doubted whether, except by the special action of God's grace, those relations can ever again be what they once might have been. The soul has missed the opportunity of that deepest experience of God which finds expression in the words, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"; it has thrown away that sense of love which goes hand in hand with suffering. And

such a soul—always excepting the special mercy which gives us chances over and over again—must be the poorer. It has lost where it might have gained. When time has done its work and repaired or covered up all ravages there may be no weakening of faith, no perceptible change in the relation with God. Nay, there may be even an added zest, the zest of contrition—but nevertheless there is impoverishment where there should have been enrichment.

The angels, Pain and Sorrow, come to all men sooner or later, as life goes on. There are those who know them well; those upon whom the solemn shadow of their presence has so often fallen that they have learned to see in it only a harbinger of the light behind. There are those, again, who have met them seldom, who have found them strong and terrible, who have won sanctuary hardly. And there are those who know them still only as names, to whom the hour when they shall stand face to face has not yet come. But come it will. Its striking may pass unnoticed by any but him for whom it seems to peal and ring, silencing every other sound. None may understand, perhaps. Life may go on to all intents and purposes as usual. Only for one soul more has come the crisis when the only thing that matters is to know the road which leads to sanctuary. It may be fear has come to dog our every thought—fear for a life dearer to us than our

own. We are never quite at rest ; sleeping and waking we are in suspense. The sword hangs always over our head, because it hangs over the head of someone whom we love. And we are powerless. That is the bitterest pain. We are utterly powerless to help him or protect him.

We are powerless, but God is powerful. Let us lay our anguish at His feet. Let us put the one we love into His hand—not only once and for all, but again and again, day after day, as our trust fails us day after day ; day after day, as our fears return upon us day after day. Let us take sanctuary from the dread which weighs upon us. We shall learn so much in those quiet moments at the feet of Jesus. We shall learn that not a sparrow falls unless it is His will, and that His will is always good. We shall learn that the one we love is absolutely safe in His divine hand—safe in the midst of battle as in his home, if God sees that such safety is the best for him. We shall learn this with that deepest learning which sinks into the very soul and becomes part of our being. We shall learn it thus in sanctuary as we can learn it nowhere else.

Or perhaps we fear no longer. Death has come into our life, taking away the very light of our eyes, blotting out all light, and leaving us despairing in the darkness. Nothing can give us back that which we have lost. Nothing can restore to us the happiness which is gone for ever. Nothing can make life again that which

it was. Now, indeed, the only comfort left is the comfort of the soul. The one balm which will ease can touch our wound only when our will, submitting, becomes one with the will of God. To that submission, so difficult, so impossible to nature, who can help us? Human friends avail us no more. The fearful void, the unimaginable blankness, which seem to swallow up the heart when it knows that the world no longer holds its dearest treasure, that never again with the earthly senses will it see or hear or touch that one—perhaps the only one—who was its earthly love, paralyze the whole being. The very power of expression dies.

In that hour of direst need we realize that One, and One alone, will serve us. Nowhere in all the world is any help or hope or comfort. Nowhere, except with our Lord, can we find refuge. We cannot tell the nearest who is left to us—we would not, if we could—the misery, the horror, the rebellion which is surging within us. We cannot tell the Friend at whose feet we fall as we cast ourselves upon the rights of sanctuary—we need not tell Him. Here is the very essence of all that this Sanctuary means. It is just because He knows, untold, because there is no innermost depth of our suffering that He does not see, because we are utterly open to His infinite compassion without any act or effort of our own, that under the glance of His divinely tender eyes we can be still. And what that

stillness holds for every soul in agony let no soul which has not proved it attempt even to think.

There are other losses, bitterer than death itself. There are desolations which cannot look for consolation even beyond the grave—broken faiths, hopes long deferred and disappointed utterly at last, sufferings which shame and poison. No earthly hand may touch such wounds as these—wounds which so agonize and ache and fester, and will not let us know a moment's ease or rest. The Hand that was pierced for us alone may handle them, the Heart which has felt them—yes, and wounds greater still—alone has balm for them. No protector, however powerful or wise or loving, can save us from one throb, one pang. But a Man shall be for us a hiding-place from the storm, the Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief—the Man Christ Jesus.

These are the great occasions of our lives. They come but rarely. God knows our weakness. He strikes hard and cuts deep when He must—and only when He must. For the most part He shapes our littleness by little things. The minor troubles, the petty anxieties, the small sufferings of life, from which no one is wholly free—these make one path by which God leads us to Himself. And since it is the path which most of us must follow for the greater part of life it is well, indeed, that we

should recognize our Guide upon it, and know whither it is that He is leading us.

To look upon the slighter pains of life as too insignificant to be dealt with spiritually is to make one of those fatal mistakes in proportion which man is prone to make because he at once over-estimates and under-estimates one of the factors in the problem—himself. These slighter pains are insignificant indeed. But in his lower nature, what is more insignificant than man? The way of the Cross is great, the haven to which it leads is great. But great and very great, with a share in the greatness of God, is the higher nature of man. And because the lower and the higher are mysteriously yoked together, and disturbance in the one so often clouds and troubles the other, therefore the deep resources which alone can meet the deep needs of the soul may and must be called upon for causes which, if man were not at the same time so little and so large, would be in truth inadequate. Each one of the small cares, the small distresses of life, must be dealt with, as it comes, in one way or another. These things cannot touch us day after day, however light the touch may be, without at last leaving their mark upon us. And upon our method of dealing with them, upon the side which we present to them, depends the character of that mark. We may deal with them solely in our lower nature, more or less patiently, more or less bravely, as our share of

the natural virtues is greater or smaller ; and shut off thus from the influence of grace, they will preoccupy us and distract us, and even while we bear them with resignation will lower our spiritual vitality. On the other hand, realizing that nothing which comes to us can leave untouched that soul which is our essence, that all things, however small, have their ultimate end in the greater glory of God, we may deal with them in that higher sphere where alone we can understand their true significance—we can make them lead us to sanctuary.

The present is the day of great anxieties, of great sufferings. But it brings with it no exemption from small worries ; out of the innumerable cares and occupations of our anxious lives they press in upon us on every side. Probably we shall only know in the moment when we see the scroll of our years upon earth rolled up how large a share of our enemy's work they have done in distracting our attention from God.

The petty troubles of life have probably increased immensely both in number and variety in the course of the past century, even as our interests and activities have developed. And at the same time we have become less capable on the physical or natural side of dealing with them. The condition, mental and physical, which is comprehensively summed up in the diagnosis "nerves" is a condition of real disturbance. It tends to the magnifying of our troubles,

and at the same time it renders us more susceptible to pain and it weakens our power of endurance. "Frayed nerves," "worn nerves," and so forth, are not by any means empty words. That which they imply is a definite outcome of over-civilization, over-stimulation. It has a bearing upon the spiritual life which we are inclined to ignore out of a kind of pride. We are ashamed of these nerves, we despise them, and we despise ourselves—not with a wholesome humility. We cannot bear to acknowledge that they can touch our relations with God. Yet among the "small matters" which, as the *Imitation* tells us, sometimes "hinder devotion" there are few more potent than this practically physical condition. A little child with a sore finger takes it to his mother. He does not wait until he has a broken arm. It is not too much to say that there would be fewer shipwrecks, mental or moral, fewer cases of breakdown, if men would but accept the gifts of God more simply, would recognize their utter weakness, and take sanctuary even from their nerves.

There are many other "small matters" which make our lives at times burdensome. For one it is the difficulty of making two ends meet, for another domestic worries for yet another business cares. Our Lord has help for all these things. It is our sense of proportion very often that is wrong. He will adjust it. He will put insignificance into its proper place,

and make us see what is and what is not of consequence. Above all, He will bring all things into harmony with His most holy will.

But we must give Him opportunity.

What we lose by our half-conscious withholding of our trivial miseries from the all-embracing peace which God alone can give God alone knows. We say things are too small to take to Him. We, who are nothing, take upon ourselves to judge of great or small! We do not realize that all our griefs and tears are in His sight as the passing griefs and tears of little children, because He knows that there is only one real woe, and that is woe indeed, because He has no comfort for it—the loss of Himself. To the eternal wisdom of God all woes other than this, however agonizing in the eyes of man, are nothing. But on the other hand, to the infinite pity of God all woes other than this, however trivial in the eyes of man, are worthy of compassion. He whose first miracle in His earthly life was wrought for no great cause will help us in our small necessities.

If we could only learn that He despises none of our distresses, that we need not wait for great occasions to throw ourselves upon His sympathy and love, Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament would not spend so many hours alone, and we should not go through so much of life looking upon Him almost as a stranger.

From that intimate and loving turning to the

Tabernacle which is surely desired of us by Him who dwells therein we are kept by our pride, which will not let us see that to our weakness even straws may be too great a burden, and by our ignorance and blindness, which hide from us the value of our souls. But we are kept from it, also, in two other ways. In the first place, we are kept from it not seldom by our misunderstanding of the terms on which it is offered. We must take sanctuary, let it be observed, *from* our enemies. We must not take our enemies to sanctuary. It is not offered for the purposes of parley. Even here, in the very presence of God, before the Holy of Holies, the diabolical ingenuity of our enemy is at work, and we may so abuse this great gift of God's mercy as to do ourselves harm through it, instead of letting Him do us good.

There in the Blessed Sacrament, asking only to be allowed to act upon us, is that influence beneath which discord falls into harmony, distortion is drawn into line, tumult is soothed into peace. But it cannot act upon us unless we are open to it, and we are not open to it if we are absorbed in ourselves. To let the mind dwell upon our troubles, to complain of them, above all, to pity ourselves for them, is absolutely fatal to all strength and courage, mental, moral, or spiritual. To do these things upon our knees before the tabernacle is not in the least less fatal than to do them elsewhere—

on the contrary, it is much worse, because we probably imagine that our complainings are an act of devotion, and thus add self-deception to all the rest. Many of our minor sufferings—all those which are connected with the nervous conditions which are characteristic of the present day—have to be fought. And the fight must be carried on by means of that which leads to the ignoring of them—occupation; above all, occupation which takes us away from ourselves, occupation for others. Sanctuary is offered to us, when we are worn with this continual petty struggle, in order that we may take breath, rest and refresh ourselves, and find vigour to go forth again and go on. But we shall not find that vigour if, deluding ourselves with the idea that we are going to God, we simply turn our thoughts inwards. In ourselves we shall find nothing but that which is of ourselves—weakness and helplessness, sin and misery. We must leave ourselves outside and go in to God.

In the second place, we are kept from our sanctuary by a natural and almost ineradicable tendency to measure the things of God by the things of men. We have to reckon with a certain unacknowledged suspicion that by seeking refuge before the Blessed Sacrament from all our little troubles we shall, so to speak, wear out the effect. If what we look for in that effect is practically that which has just been described—a sort of expansion or deification of the relief

which some people experience in reiterating their grievances to a patient human listener, a sort of glorification of the poisonous balm of self-pity—the effect will not, indeed, wear out, but it will become increasingly demoralizing. If what is half-consciously desired is merely a sensation of peace and rest, a sort of spiritual counterpart of the natural effect produced by passing out of a hot and noisy street into the cool quiet of a dimly lighted church, it will assuredly sooner or later grow less and finally fail us. If, in short, in seeking sanctuary in the presence of our Lord, natural influences, however beautiful, however poetical, however spiritualized, alone touch us, these influences will reveal themselves sooner or later as subject to the laws of nature and tending to decay.

But if we come in very truth into touch with our Lord in the tabernacle, if it is He who acts upon us, and no imagination of our own, then we are in contact with that which can never weaken and never grow less—the infinity of God. Here is no question of methods of prayer, of capacity or incapacity for meditation. Each individual soul is made for contact with God. Each individual soul has within it that by which this contact is to be achieved, and no soul knows the way of any other. For some it is the simplest vocal prayer, the simplest recollection of our Lord on earth, the simplest act of faith in God on high. For others there are other ways. The means

vary as He chooses—the end is always the same. We may not always feel that peace which is as if His hand rested upon us. He gives that or withholds it as He sees best. We may not always feel the strength which, from the source of all strength, is infused into our weakness. We may spend our moments in our sanctuary before the tabernacle without the slightest sense of calm or rest or peace. It may not come to us in the moment of our desire. But later, in the moment of our need, we shall know with a certainty not to be gainsaid that “virtue has gone out of Him,” and has passed from Him to us. In proportion as we draw upon that limitless and inexhaustible “virtue,” in proportion as we accustom ourselves to open our hearts, our minds, our whole being, to receive it, just so shall we begin to realize the depths of those words “limitless” and “inexhaustible”—incomprehensible as they must always remain for our finite intelligence. Our desire will grow, but that which alone can satisfy it will never lessen. Let us take all we can, let us give ourselves to be filled to the utmost limits of our capacity, and as that capacity develops so will our dawning perception of deep beyond deep keep pace, so will our longing for those deeps grow and increase. The gifts of God are without repentance, and they never “lose their effect.”

The fugitive of old braved everything to get to sanctuary, because he knew that once within

that shelter he was safe. There was no element of chance about the matter. He knew it. For us, also, there is no element of chance. Our sanctuary stands sure, inviolable, impregnable. It is the love of God—the love of God made manifest to us; the love of God as really present with us now as it was present in the crib at Bethlehem, as it was present on the cross at Calvary; the love of God with us in the Blessed Sacrament.

The fugitive of old had to bring his material presence into a certain environment, and, having done so, found material safety. We have to bring all that is immaterial—our mind, our heart, our soul—and hold them there before the tabernacle, steeping them in the Presence which we know is there enshrined. What is it that we find?

What is it that we need? Each individual soul in sorrow answers that question in its own depths, and none can answer it for any other. But the answer to the second question is the answer to the first. The sanctuary which our Lord in the tabernacle gives to the heart which in His wisdom and His love He allows to be bruised or broken is the filling of the void, the soothing of the pain, the hushing of the wailing protest which will not let us rest. We call it sympathy, healing, or peace; we exhaust utterly the beautiful vocabulary which clothes all that we can conceive of holiest, loveliest, and strongest

—still we are no nearer to any adequate expression of what we feel. And at the end it falls into one word.

Just in the measure in which each one of us has need, just in that form in which each one can receive, He gives—Himself.

CHAPTER V

SANCTUARY FROM SIN

" Mine enemies live, and are strengthened against me " (Ps. xxxvii.).

" Out of heaven hath the Lord looked upon the earth, that He might hear the groaning of them that are in fetters " (Ps. ci. 20, 21).

OF all the English words—and they are many—which have undergone ill-treatment at the hands of everyday usage few have been worse dealt with than the word *simple*. It is not only that it has been actually and definitely degraded, inasmuch as it is used sometimes to express an absolute lack of intelligence. But also—partly, no doubt, because it is thus misused—the sense it conveys to a certain number of people, even when no such distinctly derogatory idea is intended, is a sense of something delightful indeed, but perhaps just a little incomplete.

Almost everybody, coming into contact with simplicity in any form, has a first impulse of admiration, even of affection, for it. But for a large class of men and women in this age of highly developed intellectuality and restless

activity, this impulse speedily dies down. The adjective applied to things stamps them as lacking something for which the majority of men, after a time, weary; applied to a man or woman, it describes someone who is sure to be loved, but who is almost equally sure to be patronized.

The elementary perceptions of humanity are very rarely at fault—the fault develops later, in the application of those perceptions; and this sense of the incomplete in connection with that which is simple contains a distorted truth. It is the environment which is inharmonious, it is the nature of man which is incomplete. God is simple. It is one of His attributes, essential to His being. It is one of His attributes which does not come home to man, so to speak, as do two of His other attributes—beauty and love.

When our first parents forfeited the vision of God, He might with perfect justice have taken from us those twin reflections of Himself. He might at least have made them hard to come by. He might have willed that the unbeautiful spirit should walk in an unbeautiful world, that for the soul which had no love for Him love should have no existence. Is it the least among His incomprehensible and overflowing mercies—as it is truly one of the least considered—that, instead of doing what He might have done in this, He did exactly the reverse? From the moment when it came, unspoiled by man, perfect from His almighty hand, He has never ceased to flood the world

with beauty. He gives it in large things, He gives it in small things. It streams upon us in the sunshine, it covers the earth in the snow. It wells up out of a man, who never gives his Maker one thought, in floods of exquisite music. It is stamped on the perfect face of a woman whose soul is full of sin. And as He squanders upon us beauty He squanders upon us love. Not only where we might fitly look for it, where life is lived on high lines, where loveliness of thought or of surroundings might make for it a fitting home, but in the most unlikely places, in darkness, in ugliness, side by side with the vilest deeds, we find it. Not to be crushed by any sneers, not to be driven out by any efforts of a world which knows and hates for what it is that which is most divine in man, love touches us on every side, reminding, appealing, witnessing, if we would only understand its message, to the love of God of which it is a spark. Could there be any stronger proof of our deep-seated blindness and perversity than this, that with that very spark we kindle and lay waste our lives, burning our hearts to ashes, and never come to feel the fire behind which burns and consumes not? Love and beauty are ideals, each is an idea of God, and that is why no man is able to express them, why even genius can give no final word to them. Here, then, surely in love and beauty the impress of God's nature is plain to see, even to our earth-bound eyes,

But the simplicity of God's essence is not thus lavishly translated for us. It could not be so. It is a hidden deep. It is the gulf between the uncreated and that which He has made. Our natures do not fail utterly to respond to the idea suggested, because of that likeness to God which is in us, to which no attribute of the Divine image can be wholly alien. But we distort the idea, debasing and perverting it more utterly, perhaps, than any other of our ideas of God, because it is precisely that which stands definitely opposed to one of the most far-reaching effects of the sin of our first parents. That sin brought about in us confusion in the understanding. Instead of unity, it gave us division; instead of simplicity, it gave us complexity. And because of this complexity no man can find an image for the simple, no man is able to mirror, even for an instant, the simplicity of God, unless God draws him closely to Himself. Just in proportion to his nearness to God does man, in all unconsciousness, pass into the spiritual region where simplicity alone can breathe. Just in proportion as his love draws him heart to heart with God confusion dies in him. Just in proportion as the likeness in which he was made, freed from deformities of earthly thoughts, desires, and cares, stands out clear cut and distinct, so does a man become essentially and spiritually simple. Not the least among the characteristics which seem to hold the saints so far aloof from

us is their wonderful reflection of God's simplicity.

The moral nature of man is simplified as it approaches God, and as it recedes from Him, on certain lines, it increases in complexity. It is a strange fact, subtly and terribly testifying to his blindness, that in this very complexity, at once the result of his fall and the cause of much of his personal and actual estrangement from God, man finds one of the sources of his pride. We point to the growing needs of the age, to its feverish activities, its ever-climbing desires, as to characteristics which raise it above all other ages, each of which has gloried in its turn in its own similar weaknesses. The individual man or woman delights to be considered subtle in thought, forgetting how and where that adjective has been pre-eminently applied. We take a pride in experiencing a multitude of conflicting emotions, in living in a tumult of energies, in those very failings, in short, which arise out of that confusion in the understanding which fell upon us in the garden of Eden. Truly we "glory in our shame" in a different sense from that in which St. Paul used the phrase.

But though our natures retreat never so far from God, though they become so utterly perverted from the Divine likeness that we are not even conscious of that perversion, we can never withdraw ourselves beyond the comprehension of the Divine Wisdom. Whatever we are,

whatever we feel, we are absolutely open to the understanding of God ; whatever we are, whatever we feel, we are encompassed on all sides by His boundless pity and patience. Lover and Friend beyond all other lovers and friends, perfect and unapproachable in these as in all conceivable conditions, in Him, and in Him alone, we find the fulness of that which is the very core alike of love and friendship—sympathy. Sympathy, that great need of the human heart ; sympathy, without which life is unendurable, sympathy is fellow-feeling. God looked upon His creatures with comprehension, with compassion, and with love. As God, He could not feel with them. For that He had to take on Him our nature. He had to live and die a sorrowing, suffering man, that He might give us sympathy. And now with both His hands outstretched He holds it out to us for all eternity. The perfect earthly lover is the lover who understands. The perfect earthly friend is the friend who does not tire. No human being always understands, no human being always cares. The Divine Lover and Friend alone never changes. We can never go to Him doubting, hesitating, fearing lest we may not be able to explain, lest we should be misunderstood. We can never go to Him shrinking, dreading, sick at heart lest at last we have brought that for which He has no help, no counsel. He knows to the most intimate and

secret recess all that hurts, perplexes, or oppresses us. It is sometimes held up to us as an awful thought that God knows the inmost secrets of our hearts. Awful in a sense—in the highest sense—every thought of God must be. But surely there are few thoughts more deeply and essentially comforting than this. It steadies and sustains us when nothing else will do so. If we want justice, we know that we are sure of it with Him, though man refuse it. If we want help, we know that He knows better than we know ourselves what will be help indeed. If we want mercy—and which of us does not?—who can show mercy but He who sees the greatness of our need? Truly if God did not know us we should be desolate indeed—desolate to a point which the imagination refuses to take in—desolate inconceivably. He knows all and He has—He is Himself—the remedy for all. Whether our troubles be the troubles inseparable from man's existence, whether they be the outcome of the age in which we live, whether they spring from our individual temperament, they cannot pass the bounds of His illimitable compassion. For each and all of those complexities which are one of the marks of our estrangement from Him His pity has provided. Lover and Friend of our souls, unfailing, unchanging, unchangeable, in His heart alone may our hearts rest in peace.

But though He refuses help to no necessity,

though He has balm for every wound, and offers protection from every danger, there is one danger above all others from which He longs to give us sanctuary. His longing to give is always infinitely greater than is ours to receive from Him, but in one need more especially His thirst to help us is to-day one with that thirst which cried out from the Cross. He realizes, and He alone, the greatness of that danger, the depth of that need. He is aware of them as we can never be, for the danger is sin, and the need is for help against temptation, and God all holy, not man fallen, knows what temptation and sin really are.

To say this is to touch upon one of the most mysterious and terrible of man's disabilities—his lack of capacity to understand sin. To his great saints God gives this understanding as a special grace—as one of the incentives, perhaps, by which He sustains them in the struggle by which saintliness is attained. But in the vast majority of us the spiritual intelligence is blunt and dull, incapable of entering into or appreciating that which from some points of view may be called the very pivot of our relations with God. By sin man lost God ; because of sin God came to earth to die. Sin in our souls keeps God out ; in the forgiveness of sin He enters to dwell in us by grace. Sin is itself hell, inasmuch as it is the absence of God. The sinless soul—as far as the condition may be reached on earth—has

already Heaven in the continual presence of God. The depths and the heights are sounded by sin and sinlessness. We are taught this, we believe it; and yet we do not know, we hardly ever try to realize, what sin is.

Most of us, of course, know that such an action or such another action is a sin, mortal or venial. The stage at which the individual conscience draws attention to such actions varies according to its delicacy and activity, but the point comes sooner or later to every human being when he knows that he is sinning. God has provided, since this is absolutely essential, that we shall recognize a sin when we see it, that no man shall be condemned for ignorance. But of a sense of sin, of a feeling for its real meaning, its unutterable horror, we have hardly a trace. What should we think of ourselves if we had no sense of the materially unclean, if we did not mind dirt—real, hideous, repulsive dirt? And yet there is nothing on material lines conceivable by the intelligence of man which can approach the uncleanness of sin. What sin is to the sight of God only His perfect purity knows. The full vision is hidden from us in His mercy, because He realizes that we could not bear it, we could not live and see ourselves beset, as we always must be more or less, by such unspeakable vileness. But some comprehension of its enormity, in such measure as will help and strengthen each individual soul against

it, if we ask for it, disposing ourselves to receive it, He will give to every one of us.

The Passion of our Lord is the medium by which for most of us it is brought home, because it is only by holding fast to that Passion and all we gain thereby that we can bear even the smallest glimpse of what we must behold. To touch even the outskirts of the great mystery of the sufferings of Jesus is to touch something of the horror of sin. To have the slightest insight into the horror of sin is to go back to the Passion with our dull intelligence quickened and refined, our hard hearts melted and burning with love and contrition. Every widening of our comprehension of what sin is is a widening also of our comprehension of what the mercy of God is. And each development of our knowledge of God, as one follows the other in spiritual existence, changes life and the world for us as a sudden increase of light changes the features of a landscape hitherto dimly and incorrectly seen. But probably nothing changes life for those to whom it is given so greatly as does this comprehension of sin. Once and for all it must surely change the whole focus of things. In the presence of this immense evil all other evils must sink into insignificance. The real risks and dangers of life are seen to lie, not in material jeopardy, not in any conceivable earthly loss, but in this one transcendent peril—that a man may pass into the presence of his

Maker unutterably loathsome in His sight. All woe pales before this supreme woe, the woe of the soul separated eternally from God; all suffering fades into insignificance beside the suffering of our Saviour when He knew that there were those who would not let Him save them.

Our Lord in the tabernacle suffers no more. The mystery of His life there, with us, is not for us to fathom. But He is there to be our refuge and our sanctuary in all the ills of life, and most of all in the supreme ill—sin. The groans of all those that are in fetters rise to His ears, but surely His tenderest compassion, His most immediate help, is for those who are in fetters to their own lower natures, and those, in worse case still, who are in fetters to the enemy of souls.

Among the multitudes who come into His presence week by week, following the commandment of the Church, who receive Him not seldom into their hearts, cleansing their souls with love and with contrition in the Sacrament of Penance, there are very many who are conscious always of the weight upon them of the first of these two heavy sets of fetters. They cannot escape from themselves. Woven into the very fibre of their nature are habits, tendencies, desires, all making for sin—venial sin, it may be, but still sin. They cannot free themselves. Time after time they take to confession the same

dreary little catalogue, they make the same resolution—and time after time the enemy triumphs once more. This is an evil process, not only because of the fall involved, but because it hardens the soul—and the slighter the sin the more surely, because the less perceptibly, the hardening process progresses. The faintest additional shade of callousness which falls upon us—we are all callous enough at the best—is a gain to our enemy out of all proportion to the perhaps trivial lapses which have brought it about. We give way to temper, not violently, but disagreeably—it seems almost as though we really could not help it—and we go on giving way and giving way until at last it no longer seems to matter. The enemy has captured that outpost, and as he thought it worth while to do so we may be fairly certain that he will use it as vantage ground for a more serious attack. We make slight slips with the truth; there are so many reasons for doing this—politeness, vanity, convenience. The little untruth is uttered almost before we are aware that it has formed itself in our mind, and then it is so useful that it propitiates us towards its successor. We move our standard of truth rather further on, and the devil takes possession again of the ground we have vacated. We are idle and waste our time. It is so very easy and so very pleasant that it seems foolish to trouble about it. We dismiss those lost moments and hours from our consideration, and

our evil angel takes them into his, and turns to his own purposes those which are yet to come.

All these are small things in the beginning—though untruth perhaps can never be called small—but they are sin and they offend God. And just because they are small they are very hard to fight. They slip in and overthrow us, and are gone before we know that temptation is at hand. We must fight them in the open. But unless that fight is to be a continual harassment to us, unless our spiritual vitality is to be continually lowered by it, we must also take sanctuary from them. At any moment, goaded, humiliated, distressed, we may pass, not with our bodies only, but with our hearts and souls, into the presence of our Lord in the tabernacle. In that presence, in the deep peace of that Divine Sanctuary, we shall find rest and quiet for the moments which we spend there, but we shall find much more than this. For while we are with Him our Lord is dealing with the foes within us as we can never deal with them ourselves, with our most strenuous efforts. Into the soul lifted to Him, worshipping Him, trusting Him, desiring Him alone, God instils something of Himself, something which saps the strength of evil habits, evil tendencies, and makes them easier to deal with when, issuing forth, we find ourselves face to face with them again; something which, as it grows in us, as we give it time and opportunity to grow in us in the stillness of sanctuary, takes

up the space within us which was occupied by faults and sins, and leaves them little room in which to thrive. God's work in us proceeds, almost invariably, secretly, imperceptibly. We must not hope to feel and know what He is doing. The change is slow. We see no difference in ourselves from day to day, from month to month, from year to year. But there is that within us which tells us against our feeling, against our human judgment, against all evidence of sense, that we can never pass into the sanctuary of souls and come out to the fight again just as we entered in. That which then speaks to us is the instinct of the soul for God, and it is not to be deceived.

There are some, perhaps, for whom almost the whole length of life is occupied with this petty warfare against petty foes; for whom spiritual progress, by God's will, lies in their conduct in small matters. In His eyes great and small are one; He can conduct a soul to Heaven by little steps or by large strides as He sees well. But there are others for whom the way is different—those whom the enemy is permitted to attack, not with his teasing, wearing, tormenting imps, but with the great forces of evil. Temptation, fierce, obvious, almost irresistible temptation, is an experience which may come at any time upon any one of us—temptation so hideous that it seems incredible that it should indeed attract us, temptation so seductive that there seems to

be nothing within us strong enough to oppose it. It may come gradually, slinking and hiding, unnerving us with repeated suggestions of its unseen presence, until with a cold sickness at heart we realize that it has us in its grip. It may leap into being in an instant, almost conquering at the outset by the very suddenness of the assault. Repulsed and repulsed again, it still returns, always gaining in intensity, breathing forth a vigour apparently illimitable, before which our power of resistance seems hopelessly inadequate. "Mine enemies live, and are strengthened against me."

Our power of resistance is indeed inadequate—utterly, pitifully inadequate; inadequate as a toy revolver against a field-gun, a cup of water thrown on a conflagration, a drop of oil cast on a raging sea, if there is nothing else behind it. The man who has not that on which he can fall back goes down at once. But to those who cry to Him for help, who look for reinforcements from His strength, God sends always sufficient grace to make it possible to keep a footing, though not always enough to make it possible at once to cast down the assailant. The combat was begun by His permission; by His permission it goes on and on long after the soul seems to be utterly exhausted, panting, battered, almost at the last gasp. He knows the reason why He lets this be. We know that all that He permits is for our good.

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS SJ.

III. MAJOR

TORONTO

It is not for us to question further. Let all our strength go to endurance. We do not know what lesson we are learning. We may never know. It seems to us that we are learning nothing, gaining nothing, that the very struggle is so soiling and degrading that we are far removed from God, and never can come near to Him again. We come into His presence and we cannot feel it; we only know by faith that He is there. We receive Him in obedience, it may be, and we are conscious of no help, no joy. This is the time when sanctuary is ours, if we claim it—claim it in bare faith and trust—as it can never be in time of peace; ours by right of utter need, ours because we are so hard beset, ours because without its shelter we must surely perish.

We only have to go to Him. We may pour it all out, if we like to do so—all the fear, the shame, the longing to give in and have it over. Or we need say nothing. He, too, was tempted. Sometimes the simplest and most familiar words repeated, the bald assertion that we know that He is there, we know His mercy rests upon us, we know He understands, will wrap us suddenly in the peace in which is life and hope—the peace of God. Sometimes He does not give us this. Sometimes He seems to give us nothing; it seems to us as if the door was shut, as if we cannot, beat against it as we may, open it and pass in, as if it kept us sternly out, leaving us at the mercy of our foes.

It is not so—it only seems to be so. Our ears are full of the clamour of the strife, our hearts and minds are feverish and strained, and our imagination fills the stillness. We cannot know that we are safe, that we are resting. We may go forth again without knowing it. But strength has come to us without our knowledge, peace has stolen in upon us unawares. Afterwards, when we least expect it, for no apparent reason, we shall experience perhaps a sudden rush of confidence, a glow of hope, the radiance of an inner joy. God helps us in innumerable ways—He never fails.

But among all those who come and go, seeking and gaining sanctuary, there is one, surely, before all others to whom Jesus, our Lord, throws very wide the gates, to whom He stretches out both hands that He may hold him fast and draw him in, and never let him go. Worst and beaten utterly, left for dead upon the field, a hardly living wretch struggling back to consciousness realizes feebly that there is just one chance for him, and only one. He drags himself to the threshold beyond which is safety, and there falls pleading for mercy—the sinner comes to the Saviour. This is not the man who, living, or desiring to live, habitually in a state of grace, falls into mortal sin, repents almost as soon as he has fallen, cleanses his soul, and comes to God again. It is the man who has deliberately turned away, if he has known God ;

or the man who, having never wished to know Him, has quenched deliberately all those lights of conscience which never fail to guide even those who are in deepest ignorance; the man who has steeped himself in continual, unequivocal, unmistakable sin—sin which even the world recognizes for what it is.

There are those who can expect no mercy from the judgment of their fellow-men, of whom no good will be believed, who have isolated themselves by their persistent outraging of those laws with which the world, refusing its allegiance to the law of God, protects itself. There are those who are vile in the eyes of all, who are cast out by the very worst. But for such as these, when they win sanctuary—if they win sanctuary—is reserved one of its most mysterious and innermost recesses, a peace so deep, a joy so solemn and yet so child-like, that no words can touch even its surface. Incomprehensible is this truth to us—incomprehensible, almost incredible—because our hearts are hard, our love is shallow. Our Lord was thinking of it, we may well believe, when He told us how a certain father fell on his son's neck, kissed him, and brought him home and put upon him the best robe. But we have all much more affinity with that elder brother who did not understand how this could be. David knew of it. It is the beauty of the penitential psalms, a beauty so profound that no songs of joy can

possibly contain it. If we ponder it—and it is a mystery which we may fitly ponder, a truth in which we should do well to steep ourselves—it will reveal to us deep beyond deep in the wonderful love and mercy of God until we lose ourselves in the desire to love Him, even if only just a little, in return for all He is and all He gives to us.

Our love is shallow and our hearts are hard, and we are very blind in our conceit as well. We see the joy and confidence with which the whole being of the penitent is pervaded in the moment—so to speak—of his reconciliation with his Creator. We cannot fail to see it—it is the glory of God. We do not see—or very few of us have ever seen—what goes before. To think that sanctuary is lightly come by for the soul defiled, deformed, crippled by sin, is to mistake, and very gravely to mistake. That has to be gone through, almost invariably, which is so terrible that God often wipes out the very recollection of its pain from the soul that has reached the haven. It is remembered only dimly. Again we have to go to David, the great contrite heart, to express the suffering of all penitents as he has expressed their joy. There are two verses in the thirty-first psalm which voice to absolute perfection intolerable misery. By this way all must pass who by God's grace are drawn from death to life. The very touch of God, the mere suspicion of His presence, is unendurable to the

soul which has cast Him out. The fierce resistance to His drawing, made by the evil hitherto triumphant, rends and shatters.

Nor is it only that the way to sanctuary is paved with burning coals for the sin-degraded soul. It goes in and finds joy. It may not rest there always. The sinner who repents must indeed be "ready for scourges," for they will await him at every turn. Circumstances will scourge him; the details of his daily life as he made it, details which must be readjusted, rearranged, sometimes at the expense of others—all these will help to make his penance. His friends will scourge him by their sneers, their doubting joy, their open incredulity. Above all, his own self will scourge him—the tendencies which, once encouraged, cling and will not be eradicated in a day; the weariness of good which is the daily drag on the enfeebled soul; the flat, stale, and unprofitable laboriousness which week after week brings with it. Let no one think God's justice is not satisfied by the penitent, even to some extent here upon earth.

Justice and mercy go hand in hand. We may not think of God as merciful unless we think of Him as just. Nor dare we think of Him as just unless we think of Him as merciful. We turn again to His mercy as we turn back to sanctuary. We may not rest there always, it is true. But having once gained entrance, the door is open to us ever after unless we shut it against ourselves.

Weary and heartsick, feeble and miserable, tempted and wavering, we need never go beyond our strength. There, watching for us, longing for us, is He in whose hands is perfect healing, in whose mind is infinite comprehension, in whose heart is unfathomable love. He came that He might call sinners to repentance; surely He stays that He may hold them always from their sins, that they may put a shaking hand in His and never let it go.

CHAPTER VI

SANCTUARY FROM SUCCESS

“ The sun shall not burn thee by day ” (Ps. cxx. 6).

ST. PAUL'S knowledge of human nature was probably one of the most remarkable results of the action of grace on natural intelligence which the world has ever seen. Other saints have known God and have had, either naturally or through the action of the Holy Spirit, such unerring insight into the hearts of those about them as was necessary for the accomplishment of the work which they had to do in connection with their fellows. St. Paul knew men first ; then he came to know God. And his original understanding of the workings of the human heart, supernaturalized, became a tool in the hand of the Almighty which was destined to achieve marvels. In that little, very human, very simple touch which occurs at the end of the Epistle to the Philip-pians, where he rejoices that his spiritual children have had time to think of his necessities—people were too busy, it would appear, in St. Paul's day, much as they are now—he counts it as among

God's mercies to him that he has learned not only how to want, but also how to abound. "I know," he says, "both how to be brought low, and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed." Most of us realize that we stand in need of instruction from God if we are to know well how to be brought low. But it required a St. Paul to draw our attention to the fact that it is at least as difficult to know how to abound; and only those who pause to think, and look below the surface into the depths of their own hearts, will draw all that is to be drawn from this significant saying.

To abound and to be brought low—the words convey ideas which may be roughly taken as implying, in the language of to-day, success and failure! And success and failure are two words as pregnant of meaning, as rich in suggestion, as any two words in the English language. Everything that we do bears the stamp either of one or of the other. There are the great successes, the great failures of life; there are the large achievements which, sweeping a man suddenly on to a pinnacle in the eyes of his fellow-men, set him apart to be acclaimed and wondered at; there are the large collapses, the large attempts which come to nothing, which lower a man before his world, making for such humiliation as never could have been involved in any absence of effort. How near these two approach, sometimes, one to the other, how very slight the touch

upon the balance which weighs it down on this side or on that, is one of those considerations which fascinate the imagination. We see the man who has succeeded crowned with laurels, surrounded by a veritable haze of popularity, and we credit him almost instinctively with wisdom, or intelligence, or strength, of which success was only the inevitable outcome. To the man himself, achievement has actually given something which he had not before, something of confidence, of vitality, which impresses itself upon his fellows. On the other hand, we see the man who has failed exhausted, impoverished by his efforts, beaten down, and hopeless. We see him through the medium of our pity or contempt, according to our natures, a poor creature of whom nothing was to be expected. We do not dream how easily the two positions might have been reversed. A hair's breadth this way or a hair's breadth that way, and the hero might have been the scorned, the scorned the hero. We blame or praise, admire or despise the man. But it is truly God "who setteth up and casteth down," and He alone knows how and why He does it.

But it is not only in their larger aspects that success and failure play so great a part in human life. Man's life is a continual attempt; each thing we do aims at achievement; we are incessantly desiring, incessantly directing our energies towards attainment. Everything we

do either succeeds or fails. It is the scale of our existence ; each note we sound goes up or down. Much of the formation of character is in the hands of these twin influences. We cannot see the work in course of progress. But the finished product—so far as character is ever to be considered finished—often bears plainly, for the seeing eye, the traces of the workmanship. The actual conditions—success and failure in themselves—do much ; much more rests on the resistance or acceptance of their action by that on which they work. Whether success or failure makes or mars us depends on how we take it.

What is success and what is failure? We shall begin to understand how far-reaching are the ideas conveyed by these two words when we realize that their meaning continually evades us. We try to define them, and each definition opens out some further question. We try to gauge that which is within them, and we find that we must first look to our measure. For these familiar words, words which we throw about, applying them now here, now there ; now dignifying this thing, now condemning that, according to the fancy of the moment, contain a talisman. If we look into them, if we would use them truly, they reveal to us the parting of the ways. Through them we find ourselves confronted with two estimates of life for ever fundamentally opposed. We have to face the

cleavage between the things of the world and the things of God.

Perhaps there are no elements of life as to which it is so totally impossible for the man of the world and the man of God to take a common view as these two elements of success and failure. It cannot fail to be so; there is no common standpoint. If this world is essentially and in itself of supreme importance, if man's allotted span of life here is to all intents and purposes the be-all and the end-all of his creation, then he must measure all things by its standards. He would be a fool if he found it advantageous to forgo what it can give him; he would miss all things in missing its rewards and its applause. But if this world is essentially and in itself nothing, if it is only the means to an end, then, indeed, everything that it contains or can give must be measured solely with reference to that end. To consider anything connected with it as of importance in itself would be to give that thing a totally fictitious value and to judge it on false premises. It is a question of the point of view. Sometimes, indeed, it happens that from both standpoints success or failure are seen to lie in the same thing. If the world had remained as God created it, if the means worked, invariably, harmoniously towards the end, it would be always so. But because the world is opposed to God, because the means have been so wrested and distorted that the end to which they tend is

almost out of sight, to succeed with one, nine times out of ten, means to fail with the other. The rewards of the world are the punishments of God; the gifts of God are the scorn of the world. The greatest failure that this earth has ever seen was the immense triumph of the Cross. At the foot of the Cross, with our hearts in the Heart of Him who hangs upon it, we shall understand—we shall have a glimpse of understanding now and then, that is to say—that these words which seem to mean so much mean really nothing, that they are interchangeable, that all things which they can contain may be summed up in this—that we should fulfil the end for which God made us, and become one with Him.

But in the ordinary routine of life, as we pass along our road and the dust makes the great truths of life a little dim, we are continually confronted, and we see our friends confronted, by success and failure, or what pass for such: The success and failure in question are simply affairs of life and the world, the ordinary achievement or lack of achievement, hits or misses, be they large or small, of which, as has been said, life is made up. They are the current coins of the far country in which we live; they must be accepted at their standard valuation and dealt with as best may be.

How, then, are they to be dealt with?

Since there are two standpoints from which

they may be regarded—namely, as being of supreme importance or of no importance whatever—it is obvious that there must be two ways of dealing with them. The method adopted by the men who know of nothing beyond the interests of this life will differ fundamentally from the method of the man for whom this life is but the prologue to the life to come. This should be so. But is it actually the case, or is the advantage wholly where it ought to be? There are many pagans—twentieth-century pagans, be it understood, not only among the dead and gone philosophers—who endure failure with sincerity, and accept success with dignity and modesty. There are many Christians to whom failure brings bitterness and repining, and success hardness of heart and pride. To see a man or woman, who has no hope of any joy other than this world can give, bearing grinding poverty, long-continued pain, the loss of everything that makes life happy, with patience and with cheerfulness is a wonderful and most arresting sight. It witnesses to the innate and ineradicable dignity of human nature as nothing else can witness. We should do well, we Christians who are supported and upheld on every side, to look about us and acknowledge that such sights are by no means rare. The opportunity is very present now, when all men, Christian and pagan alike, are being tried in the furnace. We should do well to be more

open-minded in this matter, and to confess that we have not that monopoly of certain virtues which we take for granted is our due. With that curious faculty for seeing only that which we expect and wish to see we take notice of those cases in which lack of religious faith has as its corollary rebellion and despair in adversity, or arrogance and vanity in prosperity. We take notice also, and we well may do so, of those other cases in which trust in God gives fortitude and peace which no suffering can break down, and sweetness and humility which no praise, no earthly happiness, can corrode. But we do not apply, as we should apply it, the lesson which these things should teach us. And unless we do this it is worse than useless to us. For though we must get material for our consideration from what we see about us, it is not with others, it is not with that which we look out upon and appraise and criticize, that we are finally concerned. It is with ourselves, with our own conduct, that we have to employ ourselves. It is of no avail for us to realize with complacent satisfaction that faith produces lovely flowers and fruit in others. The point for us is this—have we any ground to hope that by God's mercy, given rain and sunshine, it will do so in ourselves?

Man is born to trouble, and he knows it well. As soon as youth, with its exuberant vitality and sheer joy in existence, is gone by, he realizes

that whatever happiness, whatever pleasure, life may bring him, it will surely bring him also care and pain. The tacit acceptance of this fact is so woven into his consciousness that he is hardly aware of its presence, but it is the basis of a large proportion of the intercourse of the majority of us with God. If this seems rather an extreme assertion, let us consider how much of our prayer consists in petitions for protection, in appeals that this or that calamity—or what appears to us to be calamity—may be averted. And how very scanty in proportion are our acts of praise and love. That our spiritual lives would gain enormously in depth and sweetness if we praised and loved God more is true. But it is not the less His will that we should thus see in Him, always, our Protector, and our only Protector. It is His merciful providence for us that we should associate Him thus with all our fear, all our anxieties, that habit should thus create an instinct by which we turn to Him almost unconsciously in the hour of our need. Most people who have any intercourse at all with God go to Him when distress comes upon them. They may go half-heartedly, they may go with so little love, so little confidence, that He cannot give them all that help and solace which wells up eternally for each and every one of us from the depths of the Sacred Heart. But at least they know that they ought to go. They have the preconceived idea that comfort is to

be found with Him, and if they do not get it instantly, too often they reproach Him, as if He were wronging them, when in reality it is their lack of trust that is wronging Him.

Failure, then, one of the bitterest and most persistent of the aches of life, is something which we know we should take to Him. But with success it is another matter. It is not so obvious, it is not so easily realized, that in success, not less than in failure, we need God; that success, not less than failure, is an enemy against whom we must take sanctuary.

Success! What a good sound the word has! How human nature springs to it! An atmosphere of success is to our mental being that which a fresh and stimulating air is to our physical frame—it braces, it gives spring and vitality, it makes effort easy and toil a pleasure. An atmosphere of success generates a certain geniality, an expansiveness in a man. It is not wholly just to say that the successful man is popular because he is successful—he is very often popular because his success makes him pleasant. Nothing succeeds like success, it is true, but nothing contains in such plenitude the qualities which make for success. An atmosphere of success often enlarges the outlook, widens the mind. All this is true. No one would dream of denying it. But that mysterious kingdom within us which constitutes the being of man is not at peace within itself. There is

division in it—fundamental, irreconcilable division. Body, mind, and soul should move with one smooth and harmonious motion. They do not do so. They strive one with the other. And so it comes about that all these good things coming to the mind may be rejected by the soul. They do not necessarily help towards the end for which it was created, and if they do not help they hinder.

We all know it. We only have to look, each one of us, into ourselves, and we know quite well, if we are honest, what happens to us when success comes our way. Whether we take it soberly or eagerly; whether we maintain a dignified calm or whether we are obviously excited, we know that there bubbles up within us something which intoxicates us. It is delicious. It makes us not only light-hearted, but also a little light-headed. It alters proportions and confuses values, so that we live in quite a new world. And on nothing does it throw so wonderful a glamour as on ourselves. For the sense of success is a sense, more or less intense, according to the nature of the success, of personal power.

Here it is, probably, that we put our finger on that element in this apparently wholly desirable and beautiful thing by which it stands revealed for what it is—one of the greatest dangers that we have to face. The love of power is one of the strongest instincts of man's

fallen nature, as it was the desire for power, the power that comes from knowledge, which was the cause of his fall. It forms so large a part of that evil within us which is always ready to respond to the evil tempting us from without, that the devil himself—not knowing that he dealt with One in whom there was no sin—fell back upon it as his final and most powerful resource in his temptation of our Lord. Give it but a little nourishment, and forthwith spring forth vanity, arrogance, self-seeking, lack of charity, a whole throng of sins—noxious weeds so swift in growth, spreading so rapidly, that they have taken possession of the garden of the soul, crowding out the delicate plants which we have tried with pain to cultivate, almost before we realize their presence. The sunshine of success, the sunshine of prosperity, seems sometimes almost to generate these weeds in us, so that we can hardly help wondering, when we look into our hearts, whether it is possible that the bright days of our life can make for our good as do the darker ones; whether, indeed, they make for good at all.

Undoubtedly, used as God means them to be used, they do make for our good. They come from Him. He teaches us by joy as well as sorrow; He gives us help and comfort as we can receive them. To the soul which cannot find the ease it needs, as yet, in Him alone—supernatural'y—He gives it sometimes through

the channels of the heart or of the mind, naturally, by the innocent delights of life. Our human happiness, our human joy, all come from Him as certainly and as directly as the highest spiritual joy known to the saints on earth. The smallest kindness shown to us by a passer-by we owe to Him as surely as the greatest earthly love which makes the happiness of all our days. The trivial material satisfaction which befalls us unexpectedly comes from His love no less than the material well-being of long years. The pettiest undertaking which goes well instead of ill, goes well because our Father's hand is on it; it is the same Almighty Hand that prospers the great efforts of the greatest among men.

Therefore we know that sunshine, since it is the sunshine of God's tenderness towards us, cannot be meant to harm us. It comes to us that it may foster all that which is best in us, that it may foster, above all, the root of every excellence and happiness—the love of God. But there are other rays which mingle with its soft beneficence, rays which scorch all the good and draw up all the bad.

We lose sight of God in our delight in His bounty. We are like a child to whom a toy is given, who runs off with the gift, not understanding that in doing so he leaves the greater treasure—the love that gave it. We gratify ourselves to the utmost with our various toys, we satisfy all our earthly desires, we indulge our senses—

not necessarily grossly—and we have no time, no thought, to spare from that which is of earth for that which is of Heaven. Not only those to whom success comes as the crown of effort, but those who have lived always in the fulness of life's good things, need sanctuary, and need it sorely, if they are to know in truth "how to abound."

And because God's tenderness is over such as these—His children whom He has chosen to make rich, prosperous, happy—as surely as it is over those who know only the hard way of life, He makes them always conscious of their need. Life may heap joy upon joy, it may give everything that heart and mind and body can ask, and in the background will stand always unsatisfied desire. Pleasure after pleasure palls, joy loses its freshness, satisfaction turns to satiety, and men and women with everything that the world can give are restless, discontented, seeking hither and thither for they know not what. This is God's touch upon His child to draw him to Himself. Even in that highest earthly happiness which has its spring in human love, that happiness which is so deep, so beautiful, so holy, that it seems for the time being to satisfy every aspiration, God in His mercy leaves a flaw. The love itself may be in truth an exquisite reflection of the love of God. But side by side with every mortal love lives fear. With its divinity is mingled that which is of

earth; it is under the law of Nature, it must pass away. And when the end comes—as come it must—what then? This is the secret of the sadness which touches all great love, which sounds in all the love-songs of the world, which is in every lullaby, in every cradle-song, with which a mother sings her child to sleep. Here is God's touch again. The fear is His even as the love is His, that hand in hand the two may lead us to Him. Those stand not least in need of sanctuary to whom God gives the greatest joy earth knows—the joy of love. For only in God's very presence will they be able to find shelter when His merciful hand takes again that which it gave, taking and giving always with one end in view—our good.

Success, prosperity, love—all these good things which come to us from God—will be spoilt for us by His enemy, if we allow it. Only in that light beneath which all things fall into order, all things assume just proportion, all things earthly fade into insignificance—only in the light which shines always from the Tabernacle can we learn how to protect ourselves.

It is not easy. It is not easy, in the first place, to realize our need until our need has risen to such proportions that we have almost lost the power to act. It is not as it is in pain, perplexity, or in temptation, when we are driven to seek help. We are not in distress. On the contrary, we are light-hearted. Perhaps we

are grateful to God, but we hardly feel that we require protection at His hands. If we seek sanctuary, what can we plead, for we are not afraid—or only with so small and fugitive a fear?

He knows. Let us go in to Him, and the slight misgiving which is His touch upon our wandering souls will grow into a large and wise one. In that stillness where dwells the peace of God we shall see things as they are. Let us go to Him quite simply, with gratitude and love, not trying to shut out our joy, not trying, even, to repress by our own efforts the fever of excitement which may be surging within us. Do not let us be ashamed to take it to Him. He knows how weak and easily unhinged we are. Tell Him about it—this is a case in which it is good for us to talk to Him. We must tell Him how happy we are, that our hearts are full of joy, that we hardly know how to think of anything else. Presently, as we grow quieter under His glance, we shall have other things to say—things about pride and penitence. Let us say them humbly and most lovingly, and, having said them, let us look within no more. Let us remember only that our happiness is given to us by Him. Let us lift up our hearts higher and higher, thanking Him, adoring Him, loving Him. We shall forget that which He has placed in our hands as we come into touch with the tenderness which placed it there.

We shall forget self, and all that self rejoices in, as we find Him. Satisfaction will be purified and lost in desire, and desire will melt again into satisfaction—the only satisfaction of the divine in man—the satisfaction of the soul in God. So shall we pass from the “gift of the Lover to the love of the Giver”—and that is Sanctuary.

CHAPTER VII

SANCTUARY SECURED

" If you have faith " (St. Matt. xvii. 19).

It is in the providence of God that for the very continuance of our material existence certain things are absolutely necessary. One of these necessities is food, others are light and air, and yet another is rest. Deprive man wholly of rest, and he dies. Curtail his rest unduly, keep him too continuously in activity, either mental or bodily, and his physique deteriorates. He suffers for the lack of that which is essential.

As it is with his body so it is also with his spirit. To strive and suffer is its lot, but intervals of rest are a condition of its well-being. That the soul grows in pain is true, but it is not less true that it grows in times of quiet, that it must have times of quiet if it is to hear what the Lord its God would say to it. To all but the very young the word "rest" carries with it something of beauty hard to define, something which goes far beyond that mere sense of physical ease which is perhaps the first response

which the brain makes to the suggestion conveyed. There are certain ideas which appeal to man in a manner for which he can hardly account, ideas to which something in his inmost depths answers instinctively, ideas which suggest something of satisfaction not to his natural being only—though his natural being may take pleasure in them—but to that higher life within him of which no man is always wholly unconscious. These are the tokens of Himself, the emanation of His presence, with which God in His overflowing bounty has filled our lives. Sometimes these tokens are so obviously from Him that it is strange indeed that we can accept them as we do, valuing them for themselves alone, not passing on from them to acknowledge and adore the Giver. Sometimes He is less plainly to be seen in them. Such an idea lies hidden in the word “rest.” Poets, writing of sleep or of death, have striven to express that which is contained in that short word, and striven in vain. For what reason, but because rest is only an aspect, adapted to human comprehension, of the immortality of God? As soon as we try to grasp the significance of the human idea, we find ourselves lost in the divine immensity. That which is finite cannot express that which is infinite. But because we are made in the image of God, because it is our unspeakable destiny to be one day united with God, there is in us that which must respond to that which is of Him. Our souls cannot live,

even here, unconformed to His attributes. His life is ours—our life must be to some extent, at least, as His.

The idea of rest, therefore, touches a chord within us, because it speaks to us of God. The thing itself is necessary to our spirit, because it brings us into line with God. And so God has provided sanctuary for us, not for our ease, not for our joy alone, but that He may give us that which we imperatively need—rest. He would calm our activities, He would hush the sounds that shut out His voice, He would close the eyes which rove to and fro so anxiously, so eagerly, seeing everything but the things of Heaven. He would have us in stillness at His feet.

And we ourselves? Is there any one of us to whom at some time or other the desire for such stillness does not come? However closely the world may press about us, it can never press out of us the recollection of our birthright as children of God, even though that recollection comes to exist only as a longing for we know not what. However fiercely and rebelliously we turn from God in trouble, we know in the depths of our agony that we are turning from its only ease. However far we flee from Him in sin, we know that we are fleeing to our death. However full our lives may be, however happy, there is always something wanting. Many, perhaps most, of the children of men would express that something in the one word—rest.

We need it, we want it ; it is there waiting for us. Why, then, do so many of us—those of us who know where it is to be found—go on from day to day wanting it still? We go into its very home, we kneel before the Tabernacle, but we do not take sanctuary, we do not find rest. We would only too gladly do so. We desire this sanctuary, we long for rest. We would do anything we could to win it. Which is the gate through which we must go in?

Is the gate prayer? Prayer may perhaps be called the latch. Prayer is the beginning of all man's intercourse, here on earth, with God. The word covers alike the first faint groping movement of the soul towards its Maker, and that communion with Him which is the joy of saints. Certainly we must desire to go in, or else the gate will never open, and that desire, when it takes shape even in the feeblest lifting of our souls to God, is in itself a prayer. But more than this feeble uplifting is not essential to our entrance, and the full gift of prayer is in the Hands stretched out to draw us in. It is the gift which we bring forth with us to help us in the fight as we take up our place in it again, it is the reservoir of strength on which we have to draw.

Is the gate love? Love may be called the hinge. Love is the very pivot on which all our lives must turn if we are to fulfil the end for which our life is given to us. It is the love of

God for us, that very love which has provided the refuge and the resting-place, which admits us, and it may almost be said that sanctuary is sanctuary just because within its shelter grows and strengthens—sometimes perhaps springs for the first time into being—our love of God. Our “courteous Lord” is there—He “standeth all alone, waiting till we come, hasting to have us with Him.” He does not wait, He does not let us wait, till we have learned to love Him, but takes us in and lets love dawn upon us in His presence almost unawares.

Surely the gate of Sanctuary is faith. Faith is the gift of God ; we know this well. We know, moreover, that it is a gift which, for inscrutable reasons hidden from us in the recesses of the Divine Mind, He does not give to all. With those to whom He does not give it He deals in His boundless love and mercy in other ways, by other means. It is enough for us to know that no soul comes into this world and passes from it denied the grace by which it may be saved. But for all those of us who are so happy as to dwell in the Church of God faith is the primary, essential blessing which each one must possess in greater or in less degree. What is the term the Church employs when she addresses all her children ? She does not—she cannot, unfortunately—address them as the loving, or the holy, or the brave. But she addresses them as “the faithful,” putting thus

into a single word the one attribute which constitutes them hers. In the ordinary providence of God for His household faith may be called the one thing necessary, because it is the germ of all things. Latent within it are all those faculties and beauties of the soul which in their full perfection constitute saintliness. If we develop this one elemental gift, there are no limits to what we may attain.

If we develop it, be it observed. Attainment in the things of God, not less than in the things of the world, is almost always conditional upon some effort of our own. The parable of the talents holds good in all directions. God's gifts must be worked with if they are to yield their increase. This is a statement which everyone accepts, but which not everyone thinks of carrying to a practical issue. Many of God's spiritual gifts are reverently wrapped in a napkin by the recipient, and put aside, and one of these is faith. In those with whom faith has grown up, to whom it was an everyday element of life in earliest childhood, who have never known the difference between faith and unfaith, this attitude of mind—human nature being what it is—is not incomprehensible. But in those to whom this inestimable gift has come after their powers were so matured as to be able to realize its nature, in those for whom its coming has changed the whole outlook upon life, those who have passed through the blackness of negation

to the light of assent—and here in England the proportion of such must be enormous—such an attitude is wholly incredible. Our Lord has said that with faith we may remove mountains. We should be outraged if we were told that we simply do not believe Him; besides, each one of us knows that in our individual case faith has already removed mountains. But we cannot bring ourselves to believe that it will do anything more. It has brought us into the Church; its work is done; it will remain in us stationary, a fixed principle, neither waxing nor waning. We fall thus into line—without their excuse—with those to whom faith has been since infancy as much a matter of course as is the air they breathe.

But such fixed principles are not in God's providence for mankind. We have to live in Him. Growth is a condition of life, and faith, like every other gift and grace from God, must either wax or wane. Catholics by inheritance or Catholics by conversion, this truth holds good for all. Most people, presumably, when they hear or read our Lord's great pronouncement upon faith, go through some unconscious mental process by which they come to the conclusion that He was not speaking of ordinary faith. He was not, truly. But He was speaking of possible faith. He was speaking of a power into which that germ which His great mercy has planted in "the faithful," individually and

collectively, might grow if we would but cultivate it. It must be encouraged, it must be exercised. For those who do thus exercise it, and for those only, in the ordinary providence of God, it will work miracles. Sometimes, indeed, He wills that it should grow by leaps and bounds under the touch of His almighty hand alone. But for the greater number of us it is not so. It is impossible, therefore, to calculate the loss to which we all commit ourselves, the poverty in which we choose to live, the twilight with which we deliberately surround ourselves, because we do not exercise our faith. It is perhaps not too much to say that there are those, even among the average "good Catholics," who can go into a church and say a prayer there with no more realization of the veritable presence of our Lord in the tabernacle than a Mohammedan would have. Belief in the fact of that presence, of course, the Catholic possesses—just that belief which constitutes bare faith. Realization—no. If we would only make it our business to attain to that realization, if we would **only** give a few minutes every day to learning from the Master who is waiting there to teach us, we should begin to understand what sanctuary means, we should begin to learn how to obtain it.

For realization—that which makes real to the heart all to which the will assents—is to faith what warmth is to the cold, what colour is to

grey stone, what love is to respect. In it is the glow, the radiance, the fervour of life. By the first feeble movement of realization in our soul we are prepared for other and yet other acts of the same class, varying only in intensity and depth, until we come at last to that supreme act of realization in which faith will be merged and disappear for ever.

In faith is the germ of realization here on earth. In realization is the end of faith, in Heaven. Let us make no mistake. Full realization is not for living man. But it does not therefore follow that no realization is intended for him. On the contrary, unless his faith is growing into that realization by which God wills to help him on his earthly way, unless such realization is growing stronger day by day, his faith is cold and colourless indifference. It is not, and it cannot be, that which it might and ought to be—his motive power and his strength in life, as it must be his motive power and his strength in death.

Realization is the gift of God, not less than faith itself. All that is lovely, all that helps and eases, come from Him, not less than all the necessities of our spiritual life. But though it is a gift which He must surely long to give us, because it means so much, He will give it only to our desire and our prayer. It will not come unsought. Something is asked of us that much may be given us.

Surely the effort we are called upon to make is not so great—most certainly it is not beyond our feeble powers, since God desires it of us. No one can judge of it for any other; each has to make his own. For one it is an effort of the mind, for one it is an effort of the heart. For very many it is pride that has to be subdued, a pride that fears the weakness of “imagination,” or another kind of pride that scorns “emotional religion.” Some will not let Him work, some will not work themselves. No one can say to any other, “Do it thus, or thus.” One precept only is perhaps for all—“Dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed!” Dwell there—that is to say, go often, as often as the circumstances of life allow. And there, in the presence of God, let each soul follow its bent. For some, that which they desire will be found as they dwell definitely and deliberately on the bare fact taught them by faith—the simple elemental truth—our Lord is there. Their prayer is the prayer which our Lord has blessed: “Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief.” They come to Him as little children, and He teaches them as little ones are taught, making them repeat again and again the same words, the same thought, until they are so penetrated with that which He would have them know that they can nevermore lose it from their consciousness. Others come with whom He deals as infants, teaching them without their comprehension, asking of them only this—that

they should know themselves as nothing, helpless indeed, as infants in His hands. Others He teaches in yet other ways. Who shall set bounds to His divine resources? But be the effort what it may, be the sacrifice entailed what it will, it is supremely worth the making. God never asks of us without returning royally. Jesus our Lord, who took the veil of St. Veronica from her for a little moment, and returned it glorified with the impression of His sacred Face, will take from us to-day in any church we like to enter the veil of our senses, if we offer it to Him, and return it transformed for ever. Unless we offer it He will not take it—it will remain a veil indeed. The choice is with us.

How can we hesitate? To do so is to throw away treasure immeasurable, to shut out light inconceivable, to turn our backs on joy unspeakable. And yet we wait. We pass the church day after day, and several times a day. Sometimes we vaguely think we will go in to-morrow. To-day we have no time. Sometimes we go in with our bodies, but our minds go on with our affairs, our hearts remain clinging to their earthly loves. We give our Lord no chance with us.

The real presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is an article of faith—taken for granted and there left. It is an immense phrase—so immense that many of us make no attempt to assimilate it. But the tabernacle upon our

altars is Bethlehem, is Nazareth, is Calvary. There is the infant Jesus, whose baby hands feel for and touch a chord in hearts which will respond to nothing else. No heart that melts at Christmas-time need freeze again, for the Child is always there. There is the Man who lived a life like ours for thirty years, unknown. The Heart that loved as our hearts love, the patience that went on from day to day as we must go, the frame that toiled and wearied as our frames must toil and weary, the human spirit that knew disappointment and depression as each human spirit must—all these are there, and always there. There is our God who agonized and died for us, dying again, as each day dawns, a bloodless sacrifice, lavishing yet never lessening the inexhaustible treasures of His divinity, that He may draw to it the poorest and the weakest, the frailest and the hardest atoms of humanity. The real presence of our Lord, His mercy beholding us, His bounty poured out upon us, His love actually and indeed enfolding us, that, and that only, is our sanctuary, and when we have realized this we may go in and come out and go in again as we will, and satisfy the longing of our restless hearts for rest.

We shall find rest, and with rest we shall find that which without it our souls can never know—peace. When our Lord came to earth a little child, the angels sang to men that peace had come. When our Lord's visible life on

earth was nearly done, when He was very soon to leave the little band of those who knew and loved Him, He gave them as the last gift of His divine tenderness, gave to their inmost hearts, gave to their souls, His own peace. He kept it to the last ; He gave it that it might comfort them when they saw Him no more. Now, in His invisible life here in our midst it is still the same gift that He offers. Above the turbulence of life, above the tumult of our passions, above the restless movement of our anxieties and perplexities, He holds it out to us, desiring only that we should come and take it from His hands.

It is part of our very birthright as God's children that we yearn for peace. It is part of our very birthright, yet again, that we reject over and over again all that the world can offer as a substitute. No joy, no happiness, no success that earth can give satisfying the soul. It is told of the first Napoleon that being asked towards the end of his career what day he looked back upon as the happiest of his life, he replied that it was the day of his first communion—one of the most wonderful and beautiful statements that have ever been made. It is wonderful in the immense wealth of suggestion which it contains. Everything there which can be said as to the futility of the things of earth, as compared to the things of God, is summed up in it. It is beautiful exceedingly in that it witnesses to that tender mercy of our

God which gives us here and there in life certain foretastes, certain glimpses, of what peace really is. The day of his first communion was to the conqueror of Europe, the master of his world, the happiest day of all his life, because it was the one day of his life on which his soul was steeped in peace—the very peace of Heaven. Every Catholic, every true Christian, can look back on such hours in life—hours when God has touched him and drawn him, through his spiritual faculties, close to Himself. Nor is it only through our spiritual faculties that such glimpses come. God is the Father of all, and He gives some hints of their inheritance even to those who would deny it. There is a certain flood-tide in great earthly joy, certain moments when happiness is so complete, when satisfaction is so utter, that the whole being passes into a strange unearthly quiet, when the one desire left is that the hush should not be broken. There is a stillness in nature, a deep calm which broods over the world in the beauty of a summer evening, a secret unknown to the glory of the radiant day, which penetrates the very soul, and draws it imperceptibly into regions where it feels itself to be indeed at home and at rest. What are these mysterious and quite unearthly feelings but a breath, a whisper of that peace which is in store for us—the peace of God?

What that peace is no man may say; as it “passeth all understanding,” so it utterly tran-

scends the limitations of man's speech. But the soul which has never felt it is always craving, always seeking ; and the soul which has felt it only once, only for an instant, knows for all eternity that there is nothing else to be desired, nothing else to be sought for, nothing else in all the heights or depths that can delight, even for a moment. For the peace of God is the love of God, and the love of God is God Himself.

O Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, Sanctuary of our souls, have mercy upon us ! Grant us Thy peace !

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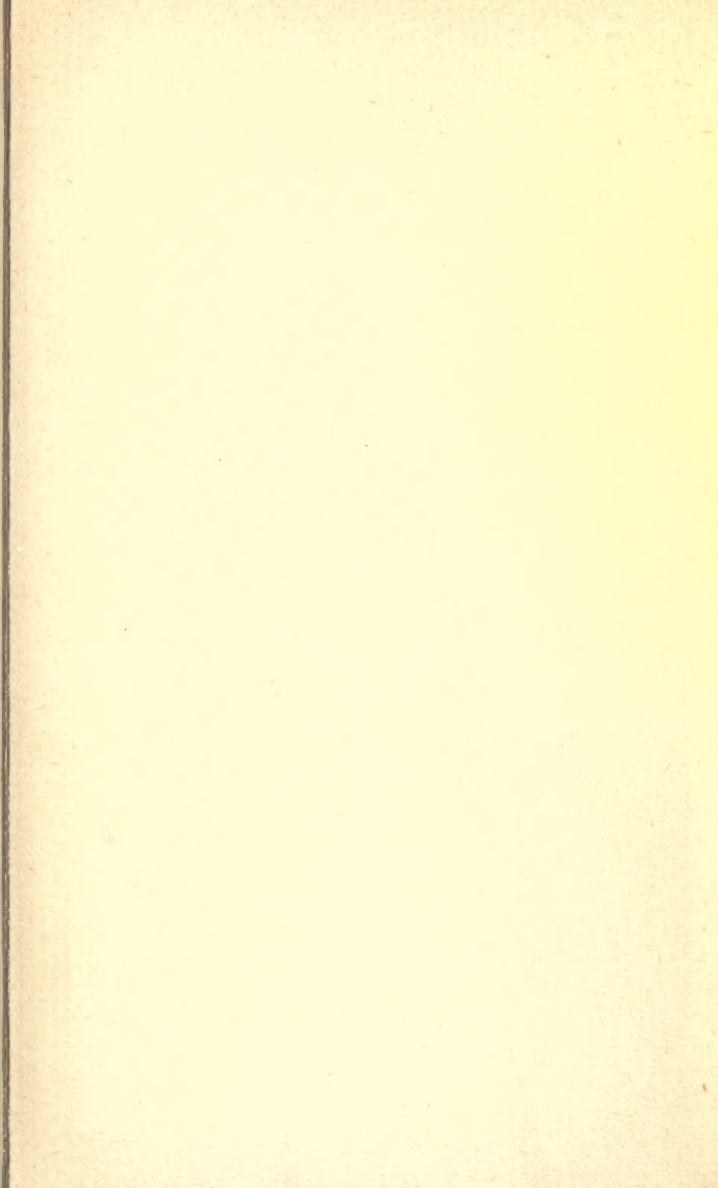
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